University of Alberta

Segregation and Gender Proofing in Two Girls' Schools

by

Barbara Heather ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

Edmonton, Alberta
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Abstract

Two girls' schools, one a private secondary school and one a public junior high school program, opened in Alberta 1993 and 1996. They provoke questions as to the process by which segregation within the education system came to be seen as best for girls and about what perceptions of gender and specifically femininity are involved. The research provides schools and parents with useful information about the appeal and focus of single-sex schools and offers insights of value to sociological debates about gender. Through the use of interviews, focus groups, participant observation and analysis of literature by and about the schools, themes were identified which indicate how participants used tacit knowledge about gender. Aware of claims that adolescent girls lose confidence and get lower grades as they focus their attention more on boys, and seeing education as the key to later security and success, participants assumed that what was needed was resocialization of the girls. They accepted male dominance as natural, but wanted to inoculate the girls against its harmful affects. They were "gender proofing" their daughters. This includes the reconstruction of femininity so that its weaknesses (such as passivity) would be replaced by male-identified characteristics such as independence, competitiveness, rationality and self-control. At the same time the girls were to remain "nice," not aggressive, responsible for their children, and feminine. Reconstructing the feminine and gender proofing the girls, together with the acceptance of boys' behaviour as normal, a general lack of support for feminism, and qualified support for the women's studies element in the schools'

programs, leads me to argue that the parents and schools aim to change gender relations by enabling the girls to demand respect from boys, but do not question the gender order. They are separating girls out in order to add them in with "value added" status. In responding to a desire to protect the girls from harm, parents and schools were in fact reinforcing the gender order which is the cause of that harm.

Dedicated with affection and gratitude to
Joe, Dorothy and Shi Hutton
and in memory of Barbara Ann Roberts
a (F)riend in every sense

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The research for this dissertation focused on two girls' schools, one public and one private, which opened within three years of each other. The schools aimed to offer girls the study skills and characteristics needed to do well at school and in their future lives, arguing that coeducational schooling led to a focus on boys rather than academic work. The goal was to change the girls' behaviour and priorities, but I wondered in what ways? What would lead parents to select a girls' school rather than a coeducational setting? What might the students think about this? My research problem is to establish the nature of the feminine characteristics which the schools aim to inculcate, and which parents wanted their daughters to acquire. The research addresses gaps in the sociological literature on gender and education, and at a more pragmatic level, offers information of value to the schools about who would support an all-girls' school, and why. This introduction discusses the intellectual and educational contexts which led to my decision to carry out research in the two schools, and outlines the research design, and the organization of the dissertation.

The Intellectual and Educational Contexts

Theories of Gender in Sociology

The sociology of gender has shifted from a focus on reasons for a gender difference assumed to be universal to questioning of that assumption. Researchers such as Komarovsky (1976) and Parsons (1955) argued that gender existed because it was functional for society, while others, such as Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), discussed the ways in which gender is learned. In the late 1980s the emphasis moved to an examination of the ideological nature of gender, such as is found in Connell (1995, 1987), Lorber (1994), Bem (1993) or West and Zimmerman (1987).

Girls' schools offer an opportunity to examine these developments. First they offer insights into the everyday realities and beliefs within which gender is produced and reproduced. Because one sex is segregated, they allow a closer look at what it means to the students to be feminine in school, and how parents and teachers think about that. As well, by separating girls in order to improve their educational performance, they implicitly assume that gender as a role can be relearned, that girls can be resocialized into a different set of behaviours and characteristics. This raises the question of what those desirable characteristics are, and how are they defined.

Beyond offering insights into how the participants view gender, the schools also offer an opportunity to examine some more recent theories of gender, such as those of Bem (1993) and Connell (1987, 1995). If girls are to change their behaviour, with a specific purpose in mind, where has that behaviour and goal come from, what are its possible sources? Again because girls have been separated for a specific purpose, the schools could shed light on the workings of gender as ideology, as a mechanism of control and on the way in which gender permeates education, and the thinking of those involved.

Many current researchers have used the concept of gender as a *process* (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and as a "fictive account" (Connell, 1995). Connell in particular highlights the multiplicity of ways in which gender is enacted, arguing that hegemonic (dominant) masculinity is formed in opposition not just to femininity but also to subordinated (and denigrated) forms of masculinity such as the gay male. Based on these arguments, it is also possible to see gender, as Connell and Bem (1993) do, as an ideology of control. The normative nature of gender construction, and its intricate ties to heterosexuality have been noted by writers such as Connell (1987, 1995), Buchbinder, Forbes, Burstyn and Steedman (1987), and Hartsock (1983). Western society is hierarchical, with intersecting sources of status and power based on sexual orientation, race, class, and gender as well as other factors such as age. Parents and schools have been identified by sociologists as primary sites of socialization into, and reproduction of, this social hierarchy, including the gender order, through such processes as the division of labour, role modelling, and allowed or disallowed behaviours.

Parents "do" gender, for example, when they want their daughters to stay closer to home than their sons (McRobbie, 1978, 1991) or when they make decisions about where to educate their sons and daughters. Schools "do" gender when they continue to provide male-biased curriculum, and to discourage girls from playing sports (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Peer groups, through a process of denigration of those who do not meet the standards set by the popular students (Adler, Kless, & Adler 1992), reinforce what is expected of each sex. Parents and schools are therefore an important location for the study of assumptions about gender, and for exploring how the gender order is reproduced. When a new school is opened specifically as a single sex school, it offers a particularly strong site for the study of gender construction, since it removes the influence of the opposite sex, and allows those involved to comment on how they think about, and what it is like to be, or work with, "only girls."

Gender and Education

In the study of gender and education, much research has focused on the ways in which constructions of gender are reproduced in school organization and practices, and among peer groups (Adler, Kless, & Adler 1992; Dorney, 1995; Ellis, 1993; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Walford 1993). Researchers note that even where more women are to be found in school administration, for example, the practices of that administration remain male-friendly. In the classroom, teachers respond differently to boys, whom they tend to challenge more, and girls, whom they tend to help more. Boys dominate the classroom, and their interests are more likely to be presented in texts and curriculum.

Where a choice of public school is available, research from England and the United States (such as West, David, Hailes, & Ribbons 1995; West & Hunter,

1993) has identified some of the reasons why parents and students select the schools they do. Gender is usually included in the list of priorities, but is seldom given as a major deciding factor, and little research focuses on how parents think about gender, or the ways in which it does influence their thinking about schooling, most specifically in the context of decisions such as choice of school.

Schools for girls offer an opportunity to begin to identify ways in which schools, parents and students interact in the construction of gender. They allow us to examine the process of school selection which culminates in the choice of an all-girls' school, and which is based on ideas about how girls "should" be and behave, at school and in their futures. Single sex schools have been relatively common in Britain, both in the private and in the public school systems. Until recently in Canada, however, schooling has generally been coeducational in public schools and single sex in private schools. Consequently, the opportunity to investigate the process of school selection here with a particular focus on gender was limited to some private, and therefore generally "elite" schools. As in the United States, there has been a recent resurgence of interest in single sex schooling, mostly leading to experiments with specific classes such as science and physical education. In Alberta, the opening of two schools, one a private residential and day school for junior and senior high school students, and the other a junior high school program in the public school system, offers a unique opportunity to research how gender is constructed in the everyday lives of parents, students and the schools they select.

Thinking about femininity is changing rapidly. The Victorian legacy of thinking about women's roles, based on a cult of domesticity, reached a peak in the 1950s, when girls were expected, and largely, schooled, to priorize home and family. From the 1970s, however, married women and in particular mothers, have increasingly entered the job market, and they are now expected to work hard and do well in school, and to go on to some kind of further training and a career (Heyward, 1995; Gaskell, 1992; Brehony 1984). They do so in a society in which there is a rhetoric of equality, expressed, for example, in the *Federal Government Equal Employment Act* (1986), and the adoption of affirmative action policies by many public and private companies. However, in spite of this rhetoric, other research has shown that women still carry the major responsibility for housework and childcare (Marshall, 1993; Hochschild, 1989) and plan their lives around the expectation that they will do so (McLaren, 1996; Duffy, Mandel, & Pupo, 1989).

Research into ways in which parents think about the gendered future lives of their daughters is more sparse. The only article on parents of which I am aware is a preliminary report on research by Watson (1996). Rizvi (1993) argues that when the focus is on improving educational opportunities for girls, the gender regimes within which those opportunities arise are ignored.[1] Parents are key players in the construction of gender regimes within both the family and education. Their selection of a school for their daughters can shed light on how they think about gender, and specifically, femininity. Given that most women will be in the paid workforce all their lives, and most will raise children, have parents changed their thinking about femininity since they were in school, and does this affect their decisions in regard to their daughters?

Debates on the education of girls have incorporated two conflictual strands since girls' schools were first opened in the nineteenth century: girls as future wives and mothers, whose behaviour should remain "feminine" and girls who should be encouraged to achieve high academic standards and go on to university and/or careers (Lee, Marks, & Byrd, 1994). Overall, the current emphasis seems to be one in which girls are seen as both career oriented and as future mothers, whereas in the past, they were given to understand that they could not have both. Debates about the education of girls cannot be separated from debates on how parenting should be done. The Victorian cult of domesticity, which ordained that women's highest calling was the creation of a home as a haven from the outside world and the nurturing and raising of children, has left its mark on western culture. The belief that mothers should stay home with their children, that women are better parents than men, and that women are responsible for their children, is still strong, particularly in more conservative Canadian provinces such as Alberta (Alberta, Premier's Council in Support of the Family, 1993).

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[1] Heyward (1995) defines a gender regime as ". . . the pursuit, conscious or unconscious, of a pattern of practices that creates an acceptable kind of masculinity or femininity among the members of an institution, ranks them according to status, and then divides labour within the institution on the basis of sex." (p. 190)

These beliefs, however, must be seen against a social and economic context which has been changing rapidly. For example, for every ten marriages, four are expected to end in divorce (Gorlick 1995, quoting Statistics Canada 1992 figures). Since some 87% of single parent families are female-headed, many fathers default on child support, and women earn less than men, divorce means a decline in income, and for female-headed lone parent families, the continual possibility of poverty (Ward, 1998; Gorlick, 1995).

Changes in economic structures also have had an impact. In most western countries, including Canada, there has been a shift from the primary and secondary industries to the tertiary sector (Empson-Warner & Krahn, 1992). While this has in some ways given women more opportunities for advancement in professional occupations, it has also provided many lower paid and insecure jobs such as in the hospitality industry. Further, cuts in government spending and contracting out to private companies of other services have reduced the number of jobs in what was once secure employment (Harrison & Laxer, 1995; Taylor, 1994; Boyd, Mulvihill, & Myles, 1991).

Schools and parents know that girls are gaining an education for an uncertain future, in which they can expect to have many jobs, and even to change occupations more than once. Further, they will probably continue to work for pay after having children, and will not be able to depend on the support of their children's father. These concerns are set in a context in which gender--the socially expected and approved behaviours associated with sex--is itself in conflict. When women are expected to work for pay, and this is not seen as a choice between marriage and career, and when women can also expect that they will be self-supporting at least for some periods in their lives, femininity seen as passive, submissive, and dependent is challenged. At the same time, women continue to be seen as the better parent, and as needed at home by their children, especially during the preschool years.

Schools are presently being criticized for their failure to produce students who are highly motivated, have a strong work ethic, are competitive, and have the skills needed by employers (Barlow & Robertson, 1994). This, in combination with a concern about self-esteem in adolescent girls, has stimulated interest in single-sex schools. The loss of self-esteem among girls was the subject of a local newspaper series (River City News November, 1992:A1) and has also been documented by such popular authors as psychologist Mary Pipher (1994). This loss is blamed mainly on boys in coeducational schools, who are seen as unrestrained by the teachers, lacking discipline and abusive toward girls. Criticisms also focus on teachers' perceived lack of interest in students and failure to motivate and to inculcate good study skills. This is attributed to size--both large schools and large classes--due to which students can become lost, and to diversity, which refers to the wide range of student characteristics and needs present in the same classroom. Schools have also often been held responsible for making good on parenting deficiencies and the negative impacts of social inequality, although those requirements have been seen by some as detracting from their main task of education. Single-sex schools are particularly desirable for girls in this discourse, not least because they have the potential for smaller classes, less diversity and a more personal relationship with teachers.

Concerns about girls' self-esteem and school performance also are expressed in ways which intersect with the continued assumption that children should be cared for by their mothers, at least in the first few years. Girls are assumed to be future wives and mothers in a heterosexual relationship. The rhetoric of academic success, to satisfy all parents, needs to address the reproductive role of women, and often does so by arguing that girls need career training and experience as a resource for their own self-sufficiency, given the uncertainty around both employment and marriage.

In light of the above discussion, it is interesting that little research on gender and education has focused on the ways in which parents, students and schools construct gender, and in particular, femininity, when making educational decisions. As mentioned earlier, at this point I am aware of one article focusing on parents (Watson, 1996), which is a preliminary report on research among parents in Britain who have considered, but not necessarily chosen, an all-girls' school for their daughter. Watson describes parents' concerns that their daughters not be distracted by boys, and focus on their school work instead, but also on their concerns that their daughters' social skills (with boys) not be damaged by separation from them. There is a great deal of research, such as that of the Sadkers (1994) on how girls are treated in coeducational schools, but less on school attitudes to gender. A useful article by Heyward (1995) discusses observations from fifteen years of teaching in a Canadian private girls' school. Heyward's article points to some of the shifts in thinking about school rules and organization which reflect social changes in the role of women. Both these articles suggest that attitudes to femininity are changing, and in particular, that the more rigid definition of women as primarily wives and mothers is breaking down.

Private schools such as that discussed by Heyward list their programs in the *Canadian Independent Schools Handbook*. They often use terms such as leadership skills and independent thinking, and claim their programs assist girls in gaining high achievement in academics, as well as in many cases, athletics and/or arts. I attended a recruitment meeting in 1996 offered by a well known Canadian independent girls' school from central Canada. The recruiters were proud of their school's achievements, and glad to discuss girls' schools with me. But when I pointed out that in two hours of conversation about such topics as character building, leadership skills, and independence, we had never once said the word "feminist," one of the recruiters responded that she thought she would be fired if she ever said she was "one of those." This appeared paradoxical to me. This school, like many others, aimed at producing girls who were not going to be subordinate or passive young women, but rather, they were likely to be career-oriented high achievers, who would choose whether or not they married. Given those facts, why the resistance to feminism? And why is it that the school still insists its students will remain "feminine"? One of their brochures states:

> Girls' schools can be especially powerful environments . . . developing an assertive, risk-taking, active, questioning attitude towards learning, while, at the same time, enhancing supportive female qualities.

The conundrum is that their very feminist programs and goals attract many parents, who are then assumed not to want their daughters to be feminist. These are going to be superwomen who are high achievers but who remain feminine--in some senses an impossibility if the feminine is seen as supportive. This then appears to be an indicator of a shift in how the feminine is envisaged, but one which is hostile to feminism. The implication is that "feminist" is seen as incompatible with femininity, and with being supportive.

Thus there are unanswered questions in current research. The overarching question here is to determine if, in the particular context of an all-girls' school, concepts of femininity *are* being changed, and if so, in what ways? Subsidiary questions then address any differences between what parents and daughters want from the schools, and what the schools see themselves as offering. Does feminism have a place in the school programs or in the desires of parents for their daughters? What is it in their construction of a desirable feminine that makes an all-girls' school seem like the best choice for parents, for their daughters, and for those who founded the schools? This is exploratory research, aimed at addressing a gap in the study of gender and education by focusing on the gendered intersection between parents, their children, education, and plans for the future. In doing so the research also is aimed at contributing to current debates about the social construction of gender.

Two Girls' Schools

The opening of two girls' schools in the province of Alberta in 1993 and 1995 gave me an opportunity to explore these questions. What made the research especially interesting was the social context. Parents had a choice of coeducational or single- sex school for their daughters for the first time. While there have always been private schools in Alberta, the private girls' school is also unique in several respects, notably in being single sex, and in offering a rigorous outdoor program. The relatively low fees, the day student option, and the location gave many parents access to a third choice of selecting a public or a private school. At this time also, the province enacted legislation allowing for charter schools (semi-independent schools offering unique programs), and setting up school councils on which parents predominated. Thus parents were selecting a school in a climate which emphasized the parental role in education and encouraged them to be more involved in the schooling of their children. A brief description of the two schools follows. The names of the schools have been changed to protect confidentiality. Their names have also been abbreviated as Christian Girls' School (CGS) and River City Junior High Program (RCJH).

Christian Girls' School

A private, Christian girls school opened in Alberta in 1993. It was founded by a small Christian ecumenical community, living on the property year round. Its initiator, and first headmaster, had taught for many years in a boys' only school, also run by a Christian community, and realized that its curriculum and organization could be equally effective for girls. Located in a relatively isolated rural area almost an hour's drive from the nearest city, Christian Girls' School (CGS) has been very fortunate in its setting. Log buildings, and more recently, trailors, are scattered across three locations within stands of trees and open fields. The addition of small flower beds enhances the peacefulness and beauty of the environment. The school offers both a day student and residential program, attracting mainly girls from a relatively wide radius in the province, but also two students from Mexico, and at one time, a student from the North West Territories. Many of the students have rural backgrounds, but the occupations of parents include tradespeople, small business owners, farmers, lawyers and teachers.

As of September, 1997, enrolment stood at just over 20 students, in Grades 7 to 12. The school places a particular emphasis on its outdoor program, designed to inculcate self-confidence, team work and leadership skills. A major event which starts the school year is a week-long backpacking hike in the Rocky Mountains, and this is followed by cross-country walking and snowshoe races. The school also places importance on its business program, which is incorporated both with fine arts, and with agricultural and horticultural activities such as raising meat chickens for sale and growing vegetables for consumption at the school.

River City Junior High Program (RCJH)

For some time prior to 1995, a group of parents with children at the same elementary school in River City met regularly to discuss educational issues, and began to develop a curriculum which they thought would address some of the criticisms of education being voiced, for example, in the local newspaper. Their discussions also included a series of articles published in the same newspaper in 1992 which focused on the loss of self-esteem among adolescent girls. All of them had daughters who would be entering junior high school within the following two years. At that time also, provincial legislation was being passed that allowed parents to choose schools for their children, and which would open the door for charter schools. The parents' group now had the option of putting into place their own dreams for a revised educational curriculum and at the same time addressing their concerns for the future of their daughters.

Charter school legislation was, however, slow in being implemented. Rather than have their daughters spend one year in a junior high, and then move to a girls' only school, the parents accepted an invitation by the local school board to open a special program under its auspices. In this way they were able to avoid being in competition for dollars with the school board, and to utilize the resources of an existing school. On the other hand, they were subject to its authority which limited and changed some of their plans, as will be discussed later. The founding parents saw public education as deficient in specific areas, namely discipline, the inculcation of good study skills and work habits, and the development of motivation, risk taking and other entrepreneurial skills that were useful across many settings. They also wanted curriculum content tied more closely to the world outside school, so that girls' interest in science, for example, would be enhanced by seeing scientific principles at work.

The program opened in September 1995 in one wing of an old elementary school building, within a poor and transient community which is becoming gentrified along some streets, and which is surrounded by both commercial sections and by more established and wealthier communities. Consequently public transportation to the school is relatively good, and students come from all over the city, including its suburbs. They arrive on foot, by car, or by public transit, sometimes transferring buses more than once.

Interestingly, the occupations of parents appear to vary as widely as those of parents at the private school. Among those I interviewed were accountants, teachers, a teacher's aide, a graduate student and a single mother who was on welfare at times when laid off from work. During the time interviews were carried out, I did not see many members of visible minorities at the school. Most students interviewed were White, but one was from Ghana, and one was Metis.

The program attracted a good deal of media attention--most, but not all of it, positive. It was quickly over enrolled, and in the second year of operation 500 interested parents attended an open house. The initial enrolment of 78 students almost doubled in 1996 and the elementary school was bumped to the smaller wing of the building, with the junior high program taking over the larger area. Plans to open a second program are in place for the 1998-99 school year. A parents' society was established to support and raise funds for the program, which quickly found itself short of the resources needed to support its focus, for example, on technology.

The two schools held similar goals, but were quite different in their organizational structures and teaching practices. Both aimed to give girls self-confidence, and to improve their academic work. However, one is a Christian school, privately run, geographically isolated, and offering both a residential and a day program which includes Grades 7 to 12. The staff live on site year round. The other is a secular public school program, with a catchment area which is broad, but confined to the limits of the school board responsible for its organization. It is a day school, and includes Grades 7 to 9. I expected to find both differences and similarities in the assumptions about and perspectives on gender made by the two schools. I also expected that the parents would have different priorities in selecting the private or the public school.

The Research

As a sociologist with a particular interest in gender, I was fascinated by the development of these schools and finally decided to make them the topic of my doctoral dissertation. I thought it possible that their founding might signal a significant shift in attitudes to femininity. When approached about the possibility of carrying out this research, the schools made me very welcome, albeit in different ways. They saw the research as being useful in demonstrating the basis of their appeal and the nature of their market.

When parents and teachers identify gender as problematic, they inevitably set out to change it. CGS is openly aimed at changing the character of its students. This is described as character building, a process that will enable girls to take charge of their own lives, and never again be treated badly by boys. The RCJH program is concerned with ensuring girls get as good an education as boys, both in terms of curriculum and teaching, and in terms of their own performance.

My dissertation explores how all of those directly involved in the schools are thinking about gender, or more specifically, femininity, and how this relates to their thinking about the future lives of the girls. It also examines attitudes to feminism and their connection to the thinking about femininity. The intention is to compare my findings with what has been argued in the literature, and to explore the ways in which gender, and in particular, femininity, is being constructed by the schools, the parents, and the young women themselves.

Research Design

The research question for this dissertation is posed in a particular context--one in which two girls-only schools have recently been opened. It is an instrumental case study with two cases, in which several different methods for data collection are utilized and the results compared (Stake, 1994). Publications by and about the schools are analysed. Staff, parents and students are interviewed, and participant observation is carried out at both sites. The advantage of using several methods for data collection is that the findings of one can be compared to another. Any outstanding discontinuities would be grounds for more questions and research. Further, talking directly with those involved enables the researcher to seek answers to questions arising in the publications and observation. Because the schools were relatively new (one still in its first year) when the research was carried out, it is still possible for participants to recall their decision-making process, but at the same time to add their reactions to the experience of actually being involved in the school. Having two sites offered the possibility of checking and enlarging on my findings through a comparison of the differences and the similarities of data from the two schools, improving the quantity of the data, and the quality of my findings. Thus the research design incorporates several dimensions such as the different standpoints (of the schools, parents and students, as well as of material intended for public consumption, and researcher observation), and different time frames (past thinking and present perspectives).

There are always strengths and weaknesses in any research design. In this case, limitations imposed by the scarcity of all-girls' schools, particularly in the public sector, means that any analysis is necessarily limited and not necessarily generalizable. Further the political and social context is arguably unique, for example, charter schools are not available elsewhere in Canada. While this may limit somewhat the breadth of the research, it does not limit the possibility of making this an in-depth look at one social situation, in one moment of time, which can generate questions for further research.

Organization of the Dissertation

The literature on gender, and especially literature addressing gender, family and education, has not addressed views of gender which leads parents and their daughters to select a girls' school. As I began to do the research, I found myself revisiting the literature and extending my reading. Consequently this dissertation reflects an interactive process between sociological research and theory, and my own data. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the literature, indicating the ways in which it addresses the data. Chapter 2 reviews current theoretical concepts and explanations of gender, focusing first on those which, due to their reproduction in popular culture are most likely to be known to the research participants. I then discuss some current sociological thought about masculinity and femininity, and current analyses of the learning and reproduction of gender. A section on uniform clothing suggests ways in which uniforms can symbolize social attitudes and expectations, but also stand as a metaphor for connections which are seldom made explicit. Chapter 3 looks at research into the practices of gender as they are expressed in schools. This chapter opens with a brief look at the historical roots of public education, particularly in Canada, and some of the debates about education which are reproduced in newspapers and popular magazines at present. This is included in order to provide a context for the opening of the schools and the actions of the parents. The chapter then discusses the reproduction of gender in education and its impact on students. It closes with a review of recent changes in family organization and economic structures which are having an impact on thinking about femininity by schools and parents. Also included is a discussion of current attitudes to feminism, since there seems to be a contradiction between a concern to give girls an equal education to boys, which has also been a longstanding goal of feminists, and a concern to maintain sex-based differences, and to keep girls feminine.

The opening of two all-girls' schools provided a unique opportunity, but one which demanded an immediate response, before the thinking processes of those involved in the schools had been revised by reactions to on-going experience. At the same time, when working with qualitative research in which initial questions may well get revised and rephrased as part of the research process, it is often good to have several entry points to the data, such that it can be checked against itself. Chapter 4 discusses these elements in the research design and the methods used to collect and analyse data.

Results from qualitative research can often be extensive and very rich in detail. To show the differences and similarities between the goals of the schools, the desires of parents, and the views of the students, these three groups of participants are presented in three separate chapters. Chapter 5 is a comparison of the two schools, showing that they differ considerably, especially in their organization and goals. Chapter 6 focuses on interviews with the parents. I found the parents were more reflective than their daughters, using more abstract and generalized approaches to education and to gender, while their daughters tended to be more direct and vivid in their responses. This led me to use rather more direct quotes from the daughters in chapter 7, than I did from the parents in the previous chapter. However, chapters 6 and 7 are structured so that parallels and dissimilarities between the discussions by parents and daughters may be seen. While they both talk about safety, for example, it is viewed more as freedom by the daughters and as security by the parents. In all three chapters discussing the findings, I use the uniform as symbolic of what the schools, the parents and the students say about femininity and about school.

In chapter 8 I discuss my findings and compare them with the discussions of gender in sociological literature. This, in turn, leads me to suggest some areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2

MEETING AT THE CROSSROADS: (RE)CONCEPTUALIZING GENDER

The research problem focuses on the ways in which two girls' schools, and the parents and students involved in them, interact in the construction of gender. What leads parents, for example, to priorize gender in their selection of a school? What does the school offer that leads them to select it over others? At a more abstract level it asks questions such as "are concepts of gender changing?" It also asks to what extent girls who are being trained to be more independent are also to be feminist? In this chapter I will review the intellectual context of these questions. The focus is on debates about what gender is and how it is learned, leading to a discussion of the social construction of gender. Explanations of gender as dichotomous, oppositional and based on biology, but learned through role modelling and socialization, are still to be found in popular culture such as media articles and self-help books. These explanations, and the acceptance that women and men *are* different might therefore be expected to be part of the knowledge called on by participants in my research when they are thinking about gender and making decisions about schools. I discuss some criticisms of these views, and the critical perspective I refer to as "social constructionism" which offers a different approach to looking at gender. By incorporating both an interactive and a structurally based model, social construction theories of gender are exposing the multiplicity and complexity of gender relations and the gender order, and the intricate ways in which gender is formed in individuals, and works at structural levels. The theories offer insights into ways in which attitudes to, and assumptions about, masculinity and femininity have both changed and stayed the same since the rise of Victorian sexual science. The title of Brown and Gilligan's (1992) study of girls' development captures the heart of social construction theories. They can shed light on the intellectual and social contexts within which the schools, parents and students "meet at the crossroads," coming together with the intent of changing femininity in specific ways. The theories suggest some theoretical directions for thinking about the goals of girls' schools.

Chapter 3 focuses on the practices of gender, and in particular, debates about how gender works in educational institutions. It will set up the social context within which the decison to become involved in a girls' school is made, and discuss some of the ways in which gender assumptions have consequences through social practices such as teaching and parenting.

I begin chapter 2 with an explanation of my position in regard to feminist writings, and with definitions of gender and of ideology which will be used throughout the discussion. The next section outlines Victorian constructions of masculinity and femininity which have left a continuing legacy of beliefs about the desirable behaviours and attributes associated with each sex, and which form part of the context in which the two case studies are set. The chapter continues with some current debates over gender, focusing in particular on gender relations and the gender order as these are expressed in theories about social constructions of gender.

Feminist Writings

For the purposes of this dissertation I define feminism within the broad framework of theory and practice addressed at the relative exclusion of women from participation in the social structures and institutions of Western society. Specifically feminist theories address the patriarchal culture which treats women as subordinate to men and as marginalized within the family. Feminism is therefore self-consciously located within a theoretical framework which is critical, emphasizing gender while not excluding other categories of socially defined difference such as class or race/ethnicity, which are markers of inferiority in a society. Given such a framework, feminist theory is closely related to practice addressed at changing social structures.

In my review of the literature I describe and discuss arguments about gender without necessarily drawing attention to whether the writers describe themselves as feminist, and what kind of feminist. This is done in part because it is not easy to categorize modern feminist theories, and in part to keep the focus of the review on gender, rather than on the complex debates among feminists which are currently enlarging understanding of it.

Definitions of Gender and Ideology

John Money first coined the term "gender role" in the 1950s,[1] but it was not until 1972 that Ann Oakley introduced it formally to sociology in her book *Sex, Gender and Society*. For Money, it refers both to a sense of oneself as male or female, and to the presentation of that self to others. In the hands of sociologists, gender has also become the term for those characteristics and behaviours which are attributed to or expected of members of the male or female sex. The term "gender" was picked up by writers within all the social sciences, and has been used extensively, but often interchangeably with "sex" as in biological sex. West and Fenstermaker (1993:358) describe sex as "determined [in Western societies] through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria." What makes this determination possible, they go on to say, is the cultural insistence that there are only two sexes and that they are different from each other. Sex is generally established through obligatory displays such as hair and clothing, which makes it possible for someone of one biological sex to pass as the other. In other words, sex category can serve as a proxy for sex but is not necessarily in alignment. Gender, West and Fenstermaker argue, is "a situated accomplishment: the local management of conduct in relation to normative conceptions." This concept is based on "accountability," that is, that there can be serious consequences for the violation of norms. McLaren (1997) describes trials for such crimes as abortion and cross dressing which could be given serious sentences including corporal punishment or the death sentence at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. He argues that the real crime was not being a gentleman, or not being manly.

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[1] John Money and Anke Ehrhardt began their research on intersexed children in the 1950s, but did not publish their complete findings until 1972. (Van Den Wijngaard, 1997)

My definition of gender in this dissertation incorporates behaviours and characteristics associated with gender, the presentation of oneself as male or female (gender role), and a sense of oneself as male or female (gender identity). In other words, gender has an existance of its own, as a set of normative beliefs and values about how men and women should be, which is incorporated into the individual's sense of self in a process of continual interaction with social structures, themselves changed through this process. Connell argues that gender is a "fictive account" (1987), and in regard to masculinities describes it as a "project" that is lifelong (1995). As such it may also be regarded as a social institution (Lorber, 1994), which permeates all other social institutions. Culturally based values and beliefs, and the organization of social institutions such as the family, education, and the economy are based on the assumption of male/female difference, which is then internalized and affects the sense of self.

The definition of ideology used here is that of writers such as Thompson (1990), Dant (1991) and Smith (1990a & 1990b), who view ideology as necessarily hegemonic. Ideology in this sense implies self-interest, but does not necessarily argue for a conspiracy. Rather, in the case of gender, for example, certain constructions have been of value to dominant groups in the prevailing social order, and have been promoted as such. Thus the cult of domesticity justified the exclusion of women from the public world and the demand for a family wage (see below). Gender is also fragmented by class, race, ethnicity, and other subordinated group memberships, and by individual agency. Fragmentation can create contradictions and conflicts both between ideologies, for example, of gender and of work, and between the experiences and expectations which are embedded in one category over against those of another. This goes beyond simple role conflict to a qualitatively different set of experiences and internal processes, often leaving the individual in a no-win situation. The aboriginal woman, for example, may find herself excluded from jobs by her band on the basis of her womanhood, and on the basis of her ethnicity in an urban setting. Similarly, the good mother is currently portrayed in popular magazines as both one who stays home with her children, and as one who is self-supporting. The first assumes she is dependent on someone else to bring in sufficient income, and the second that she is not mothering adequately. Boyd (1989) writes that within the legal system, due to a shift in custody cases which now emphasize the best interests of the child, mothers face a double jeopardy. They can be good mothers who stay at home but are economically unstable, or they can be good providers whose mothering is poor due to their employment. This is a model of mothering promoted by one of the schools in this study, and by most of the parents. Other such contradictions inherent in the imposition of gender ideology emerge in this research. As Thompson (1990) argues, ideology is "meaning in the service of power." But that power is itself fragmented.

Parents and schools in this study are trying to come to grips with ideologies about gender, independence, motherhood and the good worker, which may conflict with each other. Connell (1987) argues that femininity has always been constructed in the service of men. Parents know, however, that their daughters cannot expect to be taken care of by a man all their lives, and that a passive woman is unlikely to go far in a career, or be independent.This leads the schools and the parents to look for a new model of femininity, one which will enable the young women to manage both family and career, and to be able to take care of themselves and their children if necessary. The question that arises then is to ask whose power is being served? If girls are separated out in order to give them the skills and characteristics they need to be effective in existing social structures, are the structures themselves also questioned or challenged?

Victorian Conceptions of Gender

Philosophers have written about males and females since the time of the Greeks, but it was the replacement of the metaphysical with rationality and scientific (positivist) methods which gave rise to a "Sexual Science" (Russett, 1989). Nineteenth century sexual scientists emphasized the rational, scientific method, and an evolutionary framework. Galton and Pearson's development of statistical probability was used by sexual scientists to argue that the norm, or statistical average, was "normal," and deviance from a norm was "abnormal" or not desirable (McInnes, 1997). Women, Blacks, and the lower classes, for example, all of whom did not measure up to the White, middle class, male standard, were described as less developed on the evolutionary scale. White men were, therefore, biologically ordained as the superior catgory.

Ehrenreich (1978) argues that prior to the industrial revolution, urbanization, and the social revolution that accompanied them, women had often enjoyed a "rough and ready" equality. Frequently large households, consisting of not only parents and their children but also servants, apprentices and visitors staying for varying lengths of time, all worked together for the economic benefit of the unit. Everyone's work was valuable. Industrialization took away this equality of contribution, and gradually separated the worksite from the household. As technology improved, various tools such as the sewing machine and the vacuum cleaner replaced servants, and the household shrank to the nuclear family. Along with these changes came demands for better wages. Women and children were paid less than men, keeping the wage rate down. Working men in several industries began a push to deny female employment and to be paid a wage which would support themselves and their families. At the same time middle class women and men were promoting their way of life as the best one for society. Being able to support one's family became a mark of status and respectability for men, and in fact defined masculinity. The role of wife and mother became redefined as entirely focused on domesticity. This came to include not only housework, consumption and the raising of children, but also a kind of social domesticity, through which women worked to improve the moral and physical well being of the nation. In fact women were often told they were responsible for the morality not only of their children but also of their husbands.

Victorian scientists sought to justify these changes by reference to biological and evolutionary arguments. They observed that women's bodies were closer to those of children in their shape and lack of hair. Beards became one of the hallmarks of evolutionary maturity. Phrenologists argued that women were less intelligent than men, pointing to the fact that they seldom became famous for their intellectual endeavours as further evidence. Menstruation was used as one explanation for women's inferiority--it was more a curse than part of a necessary reproductive process (Russett, 1989). The reproductive function was linked to hysteria among middle class women (hysteria derives from the Greek word for womb), and scientists argued that any energy used for education or work detracted from energy needed for reproduction and threatened the future of the race. The highest form of society, they argued, was one in which men took care of their women, and did not need them to labour outside the home.[2]

These arguments did not go unopposed. Since education was seen as the key to women's equality, it acted as a focal point for arguments for and against enlarging women's role in society. Moves to set up schooling for girls in the nineteenth century had to combat the belief that women were suited only to motherwork, and this was made more difficult because the arguments were perceived as scientific. School promoters had to counter the fears of parents who wanted an education for their daughters, but were afraid it would damage their health or remove them from the marriage market by "masculinizing" them

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[2] While it would be easy to dismiss these arguments as faulty science, modern feminists have struggled with the menstrual cycle and menopause as causes of emotional crises, including women's crimes, for example, since to use women's reproductive cycles assumes both difference and a form of (temporary) insanity, and not to use them leaves women accused of acts such as the murder of an abusive spouse with, until recently, little grounds for defense.

(Heyward, 1995; Gathorne-Hardy, 1977). Marriage was a woman's true vocation and education might make them "coarse, unpleasant creatures, unattractive to men, and inclined to forsake matrimony and maternity for a love of quadratic equations" (McCrone, 1993:34). McCrone argues that a major achievement of nineteenth century feminists was the establishment of educational opportunities for girls in the face of this powerful rhetoric. Supporters of education for women argued that a woman could not be a fit companion for her husband, nor raise children who would be good citizens, unless she herself were educated. The educated woman was a better wife and mother, and "domestic science" was essential to the well-ordered household.

> They [advocates of women's education] wanted women to fulfill their feminine destiny but not to move outside their sphere . . . Justifications for women's education were closely interwoven with fundamental beliefs about God and religion, the nation and republican government, the changing character of the family, and the sexual division of labour in the economy. . . . Mann drew on their thinking when he called on the educated woman to use her "divinely-adapted energies . . . in the work of regenerating the world" in accordance with God's design for America. (Tyack & Hansot, 1992:37)

The girls' schools incorporated training in domestic arts and sciences, together with "the accomplishments" (piano, embroidery and other arts designed to attract the attention of men), but also drew on the boys' schools for curriculum content such as classics, science, languages (ancient and modern) and sports. Their curriculum often exceeded that of the boys' schools as a result (Walford, 1993; Gathorne-Hardy, 1977). In these schools also, the sexuality of the young women was carefully guarded--any new-found freedom was restricted to the study of academic subjects. In fact, men were frequently portrayed as dangerous, and carefully chaperoned when entering school property (Gordon, 1990; Gathorne-Hardy, 1977). This cloistering, together with a school culture that was based on boys' schools, produced a male-identified culture and organizational structure, but also a repressed feminine[3] in which girls were kept innocent, strongly regulated, and taught to take up a subordinate position in society. Gathorne-Hardy (1977) argues that this would make for some problems in adulthood. It might well be difficult to reconcile such opposing messages. One possible response is seen in graduates such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who demanded a great deal more than a position as educated wives and mothers (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). Women began to demand not only the right to the same education as men, the right to vote, "but also the very same right to speak in public, to own property, to practice law, and even the right to wear pants" (Bem, 1993:9). Although justified and run as an institution for the production of better women, they inevitably, through the development of critical thinking, created some revolutionaries, and many who resisted the prescribed life path for women. Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett (1985) comment that:

> Schools, operating in their traditional fashion, do not simply reproduce sex stereotypes or confirm girls in subordinate positions . . . But they have also long been a vehicle for women who reject conventional expectations and wish to construct their own intellectual lives and careers. (p. 35)

In other words, fears that the move to open up education to women would encourage deviance from a woman's "proper" role might be said to be well founded. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that fear also included the claim that education would masculinize girls, making them unattractive to men, and detract from their natural occupations as wives and mothers. Women who took on public roles threatened the male claim to be biologically destined to a specific (and dominant) position in society.[4]

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[3] By "repressed feminine" I am referring to concepts of femininity which incorporate images of women as both sex object and mother. While men are expected to be sexual in nineteenth century ideas about gender, women are not, and their sexuality was carefully controlled and channelled into reproduction. At the same time, femininity was repressed by a school culture based on masculine organisational practices and curricula.

[4] In fact, a followup study described by Gordon (1990) found that graduates of women's colleges were less likely to marry, did so at a later age, and had fewer children. These patterns continue among more highly educated women.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries women were admitted to universities and to a limited number of professions. There was some recognition that those who did not marry needed to support themselves, and that it was perhaps good for young women to be productively employed prior to marriage. However, the dominance of mothers in the early lives of boys, and the entry of women into the public world, and particularly into the primary school as teachers, brought a backlash which included fears about the "feminization of boys." It was this fear that led to the founding of the Boy Scouts, as documented by Hantover (1978), Connell (1993), and Pleck (1987). The fear of feminized boys and men also led to a movement known as "Muscular Christianity" (Hantover, 1978; Tyack & Hansot, 1995; Gordon, 1990). Muscular Christianity called for a return to an aesthetic spirituality in which the body was disciplined along with the mind, sports were advocated as a legitimate outlet for manly competitiveness, and all actions were seen as part of one's devotion to the service of God. My first reaction to Christian Girls' School (CGS), and its emphasis on self-discipline, was to see its philosophy as being that of muscular Christianity. Aestheticism has a long history within Christianity, and according to Doyle (1995) was the hegemonic model of masculinity in the Middle Ages in Europe. True Christian men were expected to discipline their bodies, eating the minimum to stay alive, abstaining from sex or other "worldly pleasures" and focusing only on the development of their souls. CGS does not incorporate such extensive discipline of the body, but does have a rigorous outdoor program for which fitness is a prerequisite. It also expects the students to put their pleasures on hold in the interests of their school responsibilities and academic work. For example, day and residential students are often required to participate in activities on Saturdays. What is of interest in this comparison is that the original movement, as with its earlier model, was seen as part of being masculine. I argue that it is masculine attributes which the students are to acquire.

The Victorian legacy of ideas about gender includes first, the perception that it is natural--that human beings are born predisposed to behave in certain ways related to their biological sex. Secondly, while men are defined as those who compete for position in the public world, and who earn money to support their family, women are defined as those who have and raise children, encourage the moral virtue of household members, and run the family household. Third, masculinity is framed in terms of competitiveness, domination (position in the workforce and in the home), occupation and income, while femininity is defined in terms of subordination, motherhood, household management and consumption. Bem's (1993) three lenses of gender (discussed in greater detail below) are in place at this point. Bem argues that three beliefs have dominated Western thought about men and women. They are first, that White, middle class, heterosexual men are dominant and superior, the desired model or standard against which other men, and women, are judged. Second, men and women are seen as fundamentally different, and this difference is greater than any differences among men or among women. Third, that difference is assumed to be "natural," based on the reproductive role of women, and justifies their subordinate position in the social order.

These ideas continue to exist in present day society. The business world, and the advertising that is a part of it, is permeated with images of the successful male, and women executives are expected to dress in a feminized male style (tailored suits with bows at the neckline, for example), and to carry out their duties in a masculinized style. Perhaps this is best epitomized by the nickname attached to past British Prime Minister "Maggie" Thatcher, known as the "iron lady." When women take on roles normally associated with men, they are expected to conform to male standards but remain feminine. They are naturally different. The result of this contradiction is that such women are often seen either as successful public figures but failed women, or as successful women but failed public figures. This tension also appears in justifications for the founding of schools for girls which focus on academic achievement. How this can be done without making girls into boys creates a tension resolved in Victorian times by stressing that education makes better women (wives and mothers). That tension remains, and is part of the focus of this dissertation, which asks what kind of girl the schools aim to produce.

Becoming Gendered

The tensions around improving girls incorporate expectations that they can be taught to behave differently. Although gender is generally assumed to be natural, in the sense that women and men are different, it is also assumed to be learned. Parents in the two schools featured in this study often referred to boys' behaviour as natural, and either quoted others as saying, or themselves claimed, that it could not be changed, that "boys will be boys." But they also said gender resulted from socialization. Girls could be taught to be different. This sets up a tension between the role of nature or of nurture in the development of human behaviour. It is not a new argument, as the debate over the education of women in Victorian times demonstrates, although it has shifted in that the Victorians saw women as the product of their biology, as natural, while men were, as Sydie (1987) argues, "cultured." Once the human world was seen as rational and creative, and men were required to control the natural world of nature, it was easy to see women as the "repository of the natural" due to their reproductive capacity, and men as rational, and fit to rule over women (p. 3).

Below I review some of the psychological and sociological theories about gender which take sides in the nature/nurture debate, and which are often present in the beliefs and common sense knowledge of those I interviewed for this study. It is perhaps particularly in psychoanalytical theories that the basis for a biologically situated but learned sex-related behaviour can be found, but it is present in a broad-based counselling framework also, for example in self-help books. Among these are many which attempt to explain women and men to each other, or that utilize ideas about gendered characteristics and behaviour to assist couples, parents, employers and employees, or other groups, to build better relationships. Psychologists are interested in individual development, and many theories have focused on the development of a gender identity and on explaining how gender is learned. In all of these theories, there is an assumption of difference.

Psychoanalysis and Gender Identity

Early psychoanalysis, largely based on the work of Freud, focused on the ways in which the self integrated the social into a self concept. Masculinity and femininity were seen as primarily learned behaviours, the result of early childhood desires and identification with the parents, but based on the child's perception of and reaction to their genitalia (biological sex). The mother in particular was key to psychoanalytical accounts of the development of what Stoller (1968) called a gender identity. This results from the child's integration of presentations of masculinity and femininity, taking on a sex-based identification of self. Gender used in this way refers to psychic development, and later twentieth-century psychoanalysts began to focus on the development of a core sense of self as male or female, and on gender dysphoria, now called gender identity disorder, in which the inner sense of self as male or female and/or external behaviours do not mesh with biological sex. Thus, biological sex and gender became inextricably linked in these later theories. Biology is often seen as a "stronger" argument than the social (Lorber, 1994), so that if gender is linked with biology and with sex-based differences, it can be seen as not only less easy to change, but also changing natural gendered characteristrics can be seen as morally wrong. Thus the graduates of these girls' schools may find themselves being regarded as "unnatural" or unfeminine.

One contribution is of special interest here. Nancy Chodorow (1978) proposed a theory of gender identity which emphasized the importance to children's gender development of a family structure in which mother stayed at home with the children, and father went out to work to support them. Chodorow's argument that boys have to develop in opposition to the mother, while girls can develop in identification with the mother, has become part of common sense knowledge. Boys are seen as needing their fathers to provide them with a male role model, and in fact the mythopoetic men's movement (e.g., Robert Bly, 1990), is partly based on this claim. When educators discuss ways to reduce sexism in schools, one constant argument is that girls need better role models. This is the basis for including women's studies in the curricula at both schools, and for bringing in prominent public figures who are women to speak to the girls at the public school.

Two theories fall either side of psychoanalysis in the nature versus nurture debate on gender, the first being sociobiological theories, and the second, theories focusing on socialization into sex (or gender) roles. Both have been featured in articles for newspapers and popular magazines to explain why and in what ways women and men are different. As I read and reflected on the interviews I was conducting, I came to associate these theories with the words of the school staff, the parents and the students. They incorporate many of the conceptualizations of gender of the participants in this research and suggest how they came to think about gender in the ways they did. I begin with sociobiology, which focuses on gender as natural or genetically encoded, and then look at two major frameworks for seeing gender as learned behaviour--sex role and socialization theories, including symbolic interactionism. These theories are in turn critiqued by the social constructionist perspective, reviewed here as a possible basis for a critique of the constructions of femininity voiced by participants in the research. The gender order on which they focus permeates gender relations, and has implications for how gender is expressed and acted upon in social institutions.

Sociobiology: Gender as Nature More than Nurture

"One thing that every system has to take into account is the sexual division of labour," wrote Tiger and Fox (1984). Participation in economic and political activity is very different for men and women. They argue that:

> It can be predicted that in each case men will want to keep them [women] from controlling the system, and women will be unlikely to make any effective inroads on any scale into the centers of economic power. The roots of our dilemma are deep in our history. Women did not hunt. (p. 222)

The need for reproduction in the human species led to physical differences in males and females which place limits on what women can do. According to Tiger and Fox, while they recognize that there is overlap between the physical abilities of women and men, the differences between them are far more significant than the similarities. Sex differences are important and cross cultural, they argue. While it is right to treat men and women as equal, they cannot be treated as the same.

Sociobiologists focus on gender as genetically programmed behaviour. Human behaviour and social organization are seen as strongly influenced by, if not based on, genetic codes. They view the nature of men and women as fundamentally different, because they have different roles to play in the continuation of society. Men are portrayed as the hunters, and as the aggressors and defenders of society. Women are the child-bearing nurturers who hold the family, the core unit of society, together, inculcating moral values in their children, and keeping their husbands' sexuality and aggression in check. Tiger and Fox (1984) argue, for example, that the mother-child bond is the most basic structure of society, and in fact is universal among mammals due to the fact that they suckle their young. This in turn leads to a longer period of dependency among mammals than among other animals, which justifies the mother as primary care-giver, and as needing to be at home with the child. Wilson (1984) argued that the natural and biologically rational, aggressive, and promiscuous, sexual behaviour of males, is justified by the fact that they can inseminate many females, while the female can be inseminated by only one male until pregnancy is ended.

Thus the female will priorize looking for the male with the best genes while the male will priorise fertilizing as many females as possible in order to continue the gene pool. Sexual difference and inequality is seen as the result of evolution. Bem (1993:19) sums up the sociobiological view:

> During our evolutionary prehistory, the males with more aggressive, dominant, and sexually promiscuous genes were able to leave many more copies of themselves, as were the females with more sexually selective and maternal genes. As a result of this evolutionary selection, genetic differences between the sexes that are directly related to behaviour now exist in every culture, and these universal genetic differences ultimately explain why boys and girls are everywhere treated differently.

Sociobiological theories challenge sociologists to include biology in their analysis of social behaviour, but basing an understanding of the social entirely on evolutionary biology has not only been shown to be inaccurate and far too simplified (Ehrenberg, 1989), but is also conservative. If human behaviour has evolved into sex-based differences in behaviour, it might seem dangerous to change that. Arguments that women should stay home with their children are often based on this kind of biologically based assumption, and the theories have had an enormous impact on popular culture. Male dominance and aggression, and female nurturing and caring qualities in particular are seen as inevitably linked to one's sex. There is a widespread assumption, for example, that women are better at parenting, particularly of young children, and that men are more sexual than women. Men's virility is also seen as a mark of their masculinity and power (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997; Connell, 1995; Kokopeli & Lakey, 1995). This leads to an assumption that men will naturally be dominant and aggressive in their relationships with women. Connell (1987) argues that:

> In our culture the reproductive dichotomy is assumed to be the absolute basis of gender and sexuality in everyday life . . . For many people the notion of natural sex difference forms a limit beyond which thought cannot go. (p. 66)

Epstein (1986) writes that if sex roles are natural it is curious that we have to learn them. A *Globe and Mail* article of June 27, 1998, in the Science Section, is headlined "Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man? Hormones, That's Why." But the article does not ask why a man cannot be more like a woman, even though it argues that our strengths are equal and based on our differences. Men can focus more, it claims, and women can handle several trains of thought at once. What is taken for granted here is that the adult brain is not affected by life experiences, that if a woman spends most of her life *having* to deal with several things at once, this may affect brain development. In other words, biology interacts with the social in a reciprocal relationship. Studies testing theories of difference in the intellectual abilities of boys and girls have similarly been found to have little, if any, empirical support (Feingold, 1994; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). The existence of an androcentric structure of knowledge shapes how truth is constructed and presented. It is articles such as these which become part of everyday realities, of tacit knowledge.

The parents and schools are confronting this debate between the naturalness of gender, and the desire to change some of the gender characteristics in their daughters which they see as unproductive or even dangerous to their future well-being. They took for granted that hormonal changes in adolescence meant increased interest in sex, and that they needed to proof their daughters against male dominance and sexual aggressiveness, against pregnancy, and also against spending too much time and energy on their sexual interests. When proofing their daughters against these activities, however, parents turned to socialization to limit the impacts of biological drives assumed to be a natural part of adolescence.

Sex Role and Socialization Theories: Gender as Nurture more than Nature

Sex Roles

The psychoanalytic research which began to incorporate concepts of gender role was reflected in the work of sociologists, who took the concept of a social role, and applied it to sex-differentiated behaviours. The definition of a social role was as a script for socially approved behaviour (Connell & Dowsett, 1992). This could easily be applied to gender, and the terms "sex role," "male role," and "female role" became common. As with gender identity, the sex role was treated normatively. The concept of the sex role tended to be conservative, accepting male/female difference as a given (and biologically based), but also portraying sex roles as learned behaviour, based on role models and role taking, such as the young girl putting on her mother's clothes. This image of the child copying the adult of the same sex permeates our understanding of how gender is acquired (Lorber, 1994). Connell states that the sex role has also "remained the central category of academic thought about gender" (1987:30). Arguably it is the concept on which awareness of gender in everyday or common sense knowledge is most often based.

In the 1970s the concept of gender roles was taken up by liberal feminists. They argued, in part, that if gender roles *are* learned behaviours, then to bring women into equality with men requires changing the gender role content. Do away with stereotypes, and gendered behaviour will be freed of inequities. This approach has been applied extensively in schools, and is part of the understanding and objectives in the two schools studied. I would argue that they are, in fact, separating girls out in order to add them in, to give them the same opportunities to be socially and economically successful and independent as their male peers.

The problem with these arguments was that they ignored the complex inequalities of gender relations which are intersected by class and race. They also ignore the impacts of deeply held and structured assumptions about gender (Collins, 1990; Hooks, 1990; Spelman, 1988; Connell, 1987). Power is also ignored when male and female sex roles are discussed as equal. While sex role theory is a useful tool for understanding one way in which gender is reproduced, it ignores the question as to why it *is* reproduced by individual agents. Why, for example, would women continue to reproduce their own oppression through their daughters? Because sex role theory never addresses this question, Connell argues, it fails to acknowledge the biological assumption underpinning its structures. Gender difference is taken for granted. Parents and teachers at the two schools studied were trying to change the behaviour of the girls so that they would do better at school and at work. At least to this extent, they did *not* want to reproduce the gender roles which they had been taught as children. But they also assumed that the sexes are different. The girls were to remain feminine.

Socialization Theories

Sociologists and psychologists continue to argue that gender is learned and that what we are socialized into can be changed. They argue, for example, that when parents accept the view of experts that their children are differentiated by sex, their assumptions permeate how they relate to their children, reproducing the traits considered to be "natural." Parents teach their children to be male or female. Their babies are dressed in pink or blue, handled differently and taught to express (and repress) emotions differently. Girls are taught to be caring and nurturing through playing with dolls and helping mother, while boys are expected to be active, interested in sports, and to model themselves on father. By the time they reach kindergarten, if not preschool, children understand that when they stop being babies, they become boys or girls, not "children." Lloyd and Duveen (1992) argue that the rules of the gender game are unequivocal for 4 to 5 year old children. Assumptions and expectations of gendered behaviour have a powerful prescriptive impact that is embodied. Mortality rates and causes vary by gender and age, and suggest a connection between masculinity, age and death through activities such as taking risks, drinking, and fighting (Harrison, Chin & Ficaretto, 1989). Similarly, young girls become anorexic, and some die, in the effort to meet cultural standards of female beauty and performance expected of them (Bordo, 1993).

Socialization theories also incorporate a concept of socialization agents--social structures and groups which assist in the perpetuation of gender roles. Research has often focused on the media, the family, education and peer groups in demonstrating how children copy the sex role models they see, and how adults also continually adapt their behaviour to the prevailing norms (Etaugh & Liss, 1992; Signorielli, 1989; Gunter, 1986). It is socialization theory that underlies arguments about gender discrimination in schools. For example, Myrna and David Sadker's (1994) thirty-year study in education at all levels, focuses on changing behaviours as a cure for the inequities which they identified.

But not all individuals react in the same way to gendered messages. Gender as a role is not learned uniformly, or there would be no need for sanctions, or for prescriptions about appropriate behaviour. Socialization theories give an incomplete account of how gender ideas are reproduced, because they do not address the wide variations in how gender is expressed, and tend to regard the subject as a passive recipient of messages. At the same time, gender as a learned behaviour is widely accepted, and goes unquestioned in single-sex schools which aim to change some of that behaviour.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionist theories place all socialization within its social context, as a process of continual and reflexive interaction between the individual and others, singly or in groups, as well as with the social environment (Ritzer, 1983). A sense of self is developed through the selection and interpretation of symbols, storing those interpretations for future use. Ritzer records Mead (1934/1962) as arguing that truth itself is not an objective fact, but rather something created through the interactions of individuals, a product of the social environment, and because it is socially created, continually shifting. Social reality is created in interaction between individuals and their world, is based on the actors' interpretations of that world, and is dynamic, not static.

By taking the environment into account, interactionists allow for interpretations that incorporate the social world with the individual psyche.

Gender as a "truth" in this perspective would be continually redefined and recreated within differing social contexts and between individuals. No two people will respond in exactly the same way to an event, making socialization unpredictable in its outcomes. Children may learn gender roles, but how they reproduce them will vary both between children and across the life course of a particular individual. This allows for the incorporation of both individual choice and environmental influences into an understanding of how gender is learned. For example, socialization agents such as the family, school, and television, are a major source of gendered messages about behaviour and characteristics which children integrate into their sense of self (Jordan & Cowan, 1995; Etaugh & Liss, 1992), but which they interpret and express in different ways. At the same time, these interactions are being influenced by, and build, the social environment.

Some interactionist theories assume the individual is a free agent, and fail to acknowledge power as a factor in the reproduction of social structures (Ritzer, 1983). The role of power, but also the role of resistance, is ignored, and gender is still not problematized in itself. Other interactionists such as Goffman argue that it is in response to social pressures to behave in certain ways that people learn to present themselves like actors in a play. The spontaneous and wanting self is hidden "backstage" behind this presentation of self. Dramaturgy is an important insight for gender, as Goffman himself points out in an examination of "Gender Advertisements" (1976), in which he analyses photographs such as those used in advertising to show how gender is displayed in ways which reinforce assumptions about gender characteristics and relations. He argues that a commercial photograph is a realisation of social ideals, and gender displays seen in photographs and used in advertising are a symptom of those ideals. "In seeing what picture-makers can make of their situational materials, one can begin to see what we ourselves might be engaged in doing" (p. 27). West (1996) argues that although Goffman himself only addressed sex and gender specifically in two articles, he provided a framework which has been of great value to feminists. West cites work such as that of Fishman (1978) and Tannen (1990) which explore characteristics of conversational style, and her own work on the topic with Zimmerman (1987) in which they conclude that the repeated interruptions by the male partner in a male-female conversation were not only a consequence of the lower status of females, but also a way of establishing it. They refer to this as "doing" power, but also "doing" gender (see below).

An important point made by Lorber (1994) is that since both men and women know the social script of the other, through observation and through portrayals such as in advertising or films, they can behave like each other. Thus girls' schools can utilize knowledge of male social scripts in teaching girls how to incorporate these into their own behaviour. In a very different context transsexuals who want to have a sex change operation are required to "pass" as a woman for a minimum of six months prior to a final decision being made. They have to learn how to be a woman by watching others, but often reproduce a stereotyped script, perhaps because they have *not* experienced being a woman as they grew up and formed a sense of self (Eichler, 1980).

The theories which either focus on biology, or on socialization and learned behaviour offer insights into how gender is acquired, but all of them take gender itself for granted. They assume gender is *real*, that is, a set of characteristics and behavioural patterns associated with sex, which can be modified but not radically changed. While patterns do exist, however, the variety among males and among females makes any attempt to discuss each category as uniform suspect (Spelman, 1988). However, the comment of W. I. Thomas that what is perceived as real is real in its consequences applies here. When gender is perceived as real, dichotomous and natural, that perception is acted on. When women are associated with their reproductive function as prior to and determinant of any other characteristics they may have, their skills and abilities may be ignored. They are defined by their femininity, which is seen as expressive, emotional, dependent, irrational, not objective, cooperative rather than competitive, emphathetic, compassionate, creative, nurturant and affiliative (extrapolated from Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1997). From government policies which treat men and women as different, to parents who treat boys and girls differently, to the individual who internalizes the messages about how they should behave, beliefs about gender permeate society and are reproduced by its members, but in a wide variety of ways.

The schools and the parents involved in this study accepted the popular view of gender as being at least in part natural, but as capable of adaptation through resocialization. Generally, single-sex schools are founded on the belief that girls need greater self-confidence, but in focusing on gender through the founding of a single-sex school, they could become part of its reproduction. If there is an assumption of a deficiency in girls to be addressed, and separating them out to address that, it also highlights and reinforces the notion of difference. A social constructionist perspective on gender takes a more critical stance, questioning gender itself and the social context in which it is given shape.

Social Construction of Gender

Participants in this dissertation research would occasionally refer to structural constraints such as discrimination aimed at their ethnic background, or their inability to go to university for financial reasons, but they always came back to assertions that hard work and motivation are the keys to success. In other words, if their daughters put in sufficient effort, if they learned to be independent, if they focused on their work rather than their social life, they could do and be anything they wanted. Sociologists who view gender as a social construct would disagree, arguing that values and beliefs, expressed through socializing agents such as family and school, are integrated into the psyche of the individual and have an impact on their view of the choices available, as well as acting as overt constraints when enacted through social institutions such as education. Connell (1987) argues that theories which focus only on the process of learning gender are "shallow."

Children are invited in to social practice, he writes, but that invitation may be coercive, which can lead to resistance, as well as acceptance. Research has demonstrated crossing-over behaviour, for example, girls who are tomboys, or boys who like to skip (Adler, Kless & Adler, 1992; Thorne, 1993). However, once those tomboy girls reach adolescence, they often face pressures to be more feminine. For boys the pressures may come even earlier (Bem, 1993).

Any attempt to explain how individuals develop their personalities and behaviour patterns has to be many-layered, incorporating the intricacies of power, and the changing social environment of an individual's life paths. Connell acknowledges this is not an easy task. An example of research which demonstrates this process in regard to masculinities and violence is the work of Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997). The authors argue that violence results from an interactive process between the individual psyche, and sociocultural inequalities and cannot be differentiated from masculinity, marginality, sexuality, intimacy and age. Hegemonic (dominant) masculinity is underwritten by violence (see Connell, 1995 for a fuller examination of this argument), and subordinate masculinities such as those of young working class or Black males draw on hegemonic masculinity as their model. Boys and young men who use violence may find it pays off in terms of "group leadership, popularity, pride, friendship and excitement and other resources":

> Indeed, there is an argument which suggests that it is the group of boys who are most marginalised by society and by the school who are most prone to violence and who subscribe to such values and who, paradoxically, are victims of such values. They are Connell's "shock troops" who do the dirty work of patriarchy. (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997:122)

Both individual and social development are therefore interactive and constantly shifting ground. Further, individual experiences, and interactive encounters, are mediated through the practices of ruling (Smith, 1990b). In other words, we interpret, store, and act on our experiences through understandings which we have gained both through the social pressures of interaction, and from "texts" and their language, which define reality for us. Those texts include not only advertising, novels, and films, but also the views of, for example, medical, psychological, educational, and other experts, who offer us truths about sex and gender differences, such as those about differences in the bodies of male and female. Albert Memmi (1971) in *Dominated Man*, argues that the concept of "difference" itself is socially constructed. "Making use of the difference is an essential step in the racist process . . . but it is not the difference which always entails racism; it is racism which makes use of the difference" (1971:187). This can equally be applied to gender. Fausto-Sterling (1995) argues that what is presented as biologically immutable and different is not necessarily so. Williams (1987) argues that his work among American Indian traditionalists reveals the possibility of many genders, and that these need not be related to physical sex. He was unable to make sense of the berdache,[5] for example, until he saw them as another gender role that was distinct from both woman and man (p. 137). When experts base their knowledge on unquestioned and dichotomous differences between men and women, that assumption becomes part of tacit knowledge, not only concealing a range of other possibilities, but defining those who want to participate in them, such as effeminate men or masculine women, as abnormal or deviant.

The relations of ruling are encountered in the authority of those who do everything from creating zoning bylaws to the school psychologist and principal (Smith, 1990a), as well as in the male-based language in which they are presented. Butler (1993) uses the term "performative" to describe words or more often phrases which are so authoritative that they create reality. She gives the example of the sentence "I now pronounce you man and wife," which establishes the authority to define who can be married, but also locates the couple in the gender order. It is not man and woman or husband and wife, but man and wife:

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[5] The berdache are Cheyenne Nation people who are recognized as a third gender, one which comes between male and female, conforms to a prescribed role and is highly valued for mediation in conflicts between men and women.

> Implicated in a network of authorization and punishment, performatives tend to include legal sentences, baptism, inaugurations, declarations of ownership, statements which not only perform an action, but confer a binding power on the action performed. (p. 225)

When the government of Alberta said that foster children would only be sent to "traditional families" (*River City News* 19.11.97:A6) it acted to produce that which it named. Traditional families (families having two, opposite sex parents with the mother staying in the home) were defined as the only family form good for children regardless of any potential some might have for dysfunctionality. An example of how words can act as an elisive device, running together meanings that are separate, is an article in the *River City News* (28.10.97:A4). Parents and staff at the two schools studied might well have read this article, which is headed "Mother's Loving Touch Crucial to Well-Being, Researchers Find." The opening paragraph states that:

> Exploring the biology of mother love, researchers reported Monday that parental care makes such a lasting impression on an infant that maternal separation or neglect can profoundly affect the brain's biochemistry, with lifelong consequnces for growth and mental ability.

But then it goes on to say:

> Children raised without being regularly hugged, caressed or stroked--deprived of physical reassurance of normal *family* attention--have abnormally high levels of stress hormones. [italics added]

In other words, it is not the mother who is essential, but someone, any adult, who cares hugs, caresses and strokes the baby. The impression left here, however, is achieved by the performativity of the headline. Mothers who do not care for their infants adequately damage them for life, and it is mothers who should do this work. As Sydie (n.d.) writes "Motherhood is a political issue." Who should be a mother, how, and in what ways are part of state regulations in modern societies, (and even the focus on the mother is relatively recent in Western history). "An insidious form of such regulation is the promotion of the idea that motherhood is a natural, instinctual form of desire and practice," Sydie writes. She argues that it is therefore not surprising to see conservatives focusing on the family, and especially motherhood, in their political agenda, and portraying feminists as "anti-family." Information such as the newspaper article cited above have consequences in the everyday lives of individuals as they use their stock of tacit knowledge to make sense of their social context and act within it. Parents who want their daughters to do well in school and go on to a successful career, may still feel the need to incorporate potential motherhood into their vision.

Gender results from acts of power such as performative speech acts. It also is reproduced in conversational styles which differ between women and men, with men speaking in the more authoritative manner, in clothing, personal space, and many other taken-for-granted ways (Tannen, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987). People read, hear and see what is prescribed for them, accept or resist, modify or mould it to their current needs, desires, and understandings, try it out, and even play with it. But they do not always recognize the power which is embedded in messages they hear and read, acting in ways which reproduce that power.

When the schools and parents in this study argue that girls need to take on characteristics generally associated with the masculine, they make a number of assumptions. Gender is assumed to be dichotomous, oppositional, and to consist of certain characteristics that are considered "male" or "female," with the female as inferior or lacking in some way, or as the "other" (De Beauvoir, 1952). Setting aside for a moment the definitions of masculine and feminine, which are problematic in themselves, if the girls are to become more masculine women, then they are, measured by a dichotomous standard, gender deviant. They are not "real" women. However, if they remain feminine, or "real" women, then they risk being considered failures at school or in their future occupations (see, for example, Halcli and Reger [1993], who discuss women politicians and the organization of gendered political structures and relationships into which they have to insert themselves). Following this argument could lead to the conclusion that girls' schools set their students up to fail. On the other hand, given the unique ways in which individuals deal with the hegemonic messages and contradictions which they encounter, one could also argue that while girls' schools may give the students another set of behaviours to consider, incorporate and utilize, they cannot force them to change in the desired direction. In other words, the schools and the parents are set up to fail.

The schools are founded on the notion of difference between male and female. But they aim to reduce that difference, and to make the students more androgynous (i.e., incorporating elements of both genders). A different direction might be to consider the possibility that characteristics considered masculine and feminine are in fact distributed throughout the population of women and men (i.e., that there are greater differences among men and among women than there are between them), and to encourage the students to focus on what kind of person they want to be. To do so, however, would place them outside the gender order, making the young women even more deviant. Girls' schools may therefore be in something of a no-win situation.

Contradictions and Subjectivity

As argued earlier, constructions of gender contradict each other, and contradictions also occur in messages such as those about the "good worker" and the "good parent" which are invested in different social institutions. Mahoney and Yngvesson (1992:45) write that "Without an account of how subjects experience relations of power, we cannot explain what impels them to resist domination and to make change." Reviewing a number of theories of agency, they argue for one which is forged in the *contradictions* of existence. Contradictions encountered by the subject are processed in ways which can lead to conformity or resistance and change. Subjectivity, the self-conscious awareness of self, incorporates and responds to contradictions.

Contradictions are embedded in social structures. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that the process of social reproduction involves internalization, objectification and externalization. Using this frame, one can see gender as a conceptualization of differences between the sexes which is internalized and reproduced, becoming an objectified (even reified) external reality exerting pressure on the individual to conform. At the same time, gendered messages conflict and contradict as, for example, the nineteenth-century conflict between inculcating male qualities in girls through sports and curriculum content, but not allowing them to follow career paths identified as for males only. It is in the realization of these contradictions that individuals are able to carve out unique paths for themselves. The contradictions embedded in the desire to have girls become more masculine might also be a point of change, where the students form their own interpretation and response. I am reminded of the student who told me that people kept telling her that the skills she had, such as cooking, would make her a good mother. But she did not like being defined in that way, even though she wanted to marry and have children. She also wanted a career, and so decided that she would "just be who I am." Donawa (1998) writes of women she interviewed about friendship relationships:

> They were all born into colonial societies, and matured into post-colonial ones. Their lives have been inscribed by the Grand Narratives of both patriarchy and imperialism, and their own accounts of childhood and coming of age can be read as representations of the colonial and post-colonial forces that shaped their subjectivity. Yet the voices of their stories also demonstrate resistance, agency and a profound sense of self. (p. 1)

Doing Gender and Power

Subjectivity is the site of social constructions of gender but also of hegemonic messages, cultural and personal values which may be in conflict with each other. As well, individuals may present a self which is not in complete accord with their inner sense of self, but which aims to please or impress in some way (Goffman, 1959, 1976). Individuals "do" gender, argue West and Zimmerman (1987), that is, they reproduce the gender order in their daily actions. West and Zimmerman argue that gender must be seen as a "routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction," an accomplishment in which the individual is an active agent, but in which they not only reproduce gender, but also power. Power and gender, say West and Zimmerman, must be seen as a process resulting from interaction. For example, children in kindergarten and elementary school act as they think boys and girls should act, but at the same time they will "cross over" or ignore gender if left to themselves (Thorne, 1986). But Thorne also points out that when teachers utilize gender as an organizing device in the classroom, the boundaries become less fluid. When the teacher focuses on difference, the boys and girls do so also. Thus the display of gender becomes fluid, a product of circumstances as well as of individual integration and interpretations of hegemonic messages. Further, gender may be a site of resistance and reformulation as well as reproduction.

Olafson (1998) discusses the burning of a Barbie doll as an act of resistance by a student who was part of a study on resistance by adolesent girls. The student hated Barbie for her representation of "how women are oppressed." Skipping school, refusing to do school work, goofing off in class may be other, more noticed, examples of resistance. Students at the Christian school in particular were likely to be there as a result of their resistance to the organization of schooling. Olafson points out that the resistance of girls is experienced and expressed by them differently than that of boys because it is also infused with the relations of power inherent in the gender order. Not only are female students under the authority of the teachers, but they are also dominated by many of the boys in their schools. Weedon (1987), quoted by Olafson, writes that subjectivity refers to both conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions, a sense of self, and ways of relating to the world. Resistance has an impact on subjectivity and at the same time makes a statement about the subjective self and the direction in which it is developing. Resistance is a response to oppressive conditions, but in the case of the CGS, it is met by what could be seen as more oppression, albeit in conditions which also express encouragement and challenge. Each student responds differently to finding themselves in these circumstances. Some adapt and find ways to survive. Others leave, are not "invited back," or are taken out by parents.

A recent development in theories of gender focuses on the narratives which people tell and retell in order to make sense of their lives. By listening to the narratives, we can get at the underlying and often gendered meanings of their story (Donawa, 1998; Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997). Gender can be seen as a narrative of the self, told and retold to make sense of the speaker's situation. Talking about one's gender identity is to talk about a necessarily fragmented self, a "fictive account" (Connell, 1995). At the same time, individual acts are integrated into the social, which in turn presents a fictive account of gender, reinforced by performativity. It is this fluidity, both the incorporation of, and resistance to, hegemonic gender, which Connell identifies among subordinate masculinities, and which other researchers have found, for example, among disabled men (Gerschick & Miller, 1994) and women (Wendell, 1989). It is also present in the ways in which students respond to a girls' school, and to its uniform as symbol of their resocialization. Power is always present in the production of gender, but that power is not absolute.

Gender Relations and the Gender Order

Gender is a set of relations between and among the sexes. It results from and shapes those relationships, but is also itself a product of social structures (Connell, 1987). Social structures incorporate a gender order and gender regimes--sets of practices which define what is masculinity and femininity, how they should be expressed, which has higher status, within a specific social institution. Gender relations are embedded in a gender order, but also in other hierarchies of status and power such as class and race. Thus the status of a Black male is made unstable by his race, and a female professional is likely to have her credibility questioned. Messages of superiority and inferiority are backed by sanctions and rewards that overtly act to bring the individual into line and covertly reinforce inferiority. The Black female executive cannot become White and male. In Western society it is the White, middle class, male who is given high status and becomes the standard by which others are judged, but even within this group there are hierarchies of masculinity.

In the gender order which privileges masculinity, one particular set of masculine characteristics is preferred (Connell, 1995). Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) list those characteristics in some detail. The list is worth quoting for its inclusiveness:

> At this stage of Western history, hegemonic masculinity mobilises around physical strength, adventurousness, emotional neutrality, certainty, control, assertiveness, self-reliance, individuality, competitiveness, instrumental skills, public knowledge, discipline, reason, objectivity and rationality. It distances itself from physical weakness, expressive skills, private knowledge, creativity, emotion, dependency, subjectivity, irrationality, co-operation and empathetic, compassionate, nurturant and certain affiliative behaviours. In other words, it distances itself from the feminine and considers the feminine less worthy. (p. 121)

Hegemonic (or the dominant) masculinity is also constructed in opposition to subordinate masculinities (Connell, 1995, 1987). The hypermasculine, or its opposite, the effeminate male, and the feminist male, are, in Connell's model, less desirable or subordinate masculinities. Men who perform them are judged as inferior or effeminate by those who are able to model the dominant masculine. Femininity is both opposite of and inferior to masculinity, so that to be considered feminine is to be inferior. Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) also argue that hegemonic masculinity "makes its claims and asserts its authority through many cultural and institutional practices." (1997:119) and opposes subordinate masculinity, creating outsiders of subordinate members. Subordinate masculinities can only be legitimated by the dominant masculinity.

Women have little scope for the construction of such institutionalized power relationships, Connell argues, except perhaps in the mother/daughter relationship or in all-girls' schools, a point to which I will return in my concluding chapter. The gender order ordains the superiority of masculinity, leaving femininity as always inferior. Women's femininities are not organized along the same kind of hierarchies of power as masculinities. In fact, since power, authority and aggression are absent from accounts of femininity and there is no pressure to negate other forms of it, Connell suggests that femininities may be much more diverse than masculinities. However, the global dominance of heterosexual men requires that femininity be organized around them:

> The option of compliance is central to the pattern of femininity which is given most cultural and ideological support at present, called here "emphasized femininity." (Connell, 1987:187)

In other words, emphasized femininity is encouraged, because it supports male dominance. Other femininities, while formed as an act of resistance, are largely ignored, even in studies of gender. Discussions of single-sex classes or schools for girls, for example, rather than focusing on the reasons that the students are there, the type of femininity which is being promoted, or the vision of their future held by parents, tend to emphasize the extent to which the school's organization and curriculum assists girls to achieve (Riordan, 1994a; Brutsaert, 1994; Jones, 1990). Riordan (1994b) focuses on the different merits of coeducational and single-sex schooling in terms of academic achievement. Riordan notes that girls' schools have a lower level of adolescent culture and a higher order of discipline and control, whereas boys' schools are high on both adolescent culture and on discipline and control. However, he does not further explore the impact of that authority structure on the self-concepts of the students, nor does he look at parental perspectives on these schools. Even where parents become the focus of research on school choice, their reasons for selecting, or not selecting, a girls' school are described in terms of academic achievement, versus concerns about "normal" (i.e., heterosexual) development, without their ideas about gender being explored further.

Connell (1987) also argues that while some forms of femininity are formed in resistance to emphasized (or compliant) femininity, some are:

> Defined by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation. The interplay among them is a major part of the dynamics of change in the gender order as a whole. (p. 184)

Because femininities are constructed in the overall subordination of women to men, "there is no femininity that holds among women the position held by hegemonic masculinity among men" (p. 187). There is no pressure to negate some forms of femininity as there is for masculinity (such as pressure on gays). This allows for greater diversity among femininities, Connell argues, because less attention is focused on them. Male domination is reproduced by these hidden assumptions about gender hierarchies. Bem (1993) argues that assumptions such as that of the male as standard or norm, which are embedded in American culture (and one might add in Canadian also) are the basis for male domination.

Androcentrism, Gender Polarization and Biological Essentialism

Bem refers to these assumptions as lenses of gender, which give a particular view of society, justifying male superiority. She categorizes them as androcentrism, gender polarization and biological essentialism.

Androcentrism is embedded in the individual's psyche, in cultural discourses such as those about knowledge or approved behaviours, and in social institutions. Bem writes that this androcentric view is not simply a matter of men asserting their superiority, but refers to the way in which the male, and male knowledge, has become the standard or norm by which all else is judged. This leaves female behaviour and knowledge as sex specific. As De Beauvoir (1952) argued, man is human and woman is "other."

The second lens is that of gender polarization. Sex differences become the focus of interest and of social organization. Bem argues they are superimposed on all other aspects of human experience such as dress, social roles, ways of expressing emotion and sexual desire. An androcentric hierarchy requires difference, not similarity. Thus girls' schools have a uniform (tailored skirt and jacket or sweater with a white shirt), which is a femininized version of the typical boys' school uniform (suit, white shirt, and tie), and do not want their students to become masculine. They are not to become the same as men, but rather, to incorporate male strengths into their femininity. The third lens is biological essentialism. If gender difference and the male as standard can be seen as intrinsically natural, then what are essentially cultural interpretations and prescriptions become fixed in meaning and unchangeable. Boys are continually described as naturally dominant, and relatively unchangeable beyond being taught manners. Girls on the other hand, while naturally subordinate, can be taught to be more confident and assertive.

Bem argues that these gender lenses support male power in two ways. First "the discourses and social institutions in which they are embedded automatically channel females and males into different and unequal life situations," (p. 3) and secondly, the individual internalizes and integrates those lenses into a self-concept which then perceives them as givens. Thus gender is reproduced through every action within which it is embedded. Bem argues for a complete dismantling of gender polarization, an end to the distinction between male and female which, she says, places serious limitations on human development.

. . . and Power

Eisenstein (1991) also argues that the emphasis on sex difference is important because of the linkages to power, and that the meaning of that difference is deeply internalized. Women, she argues, are objectified and this has real consequences in how they are treated, and in how they come to see themselves. Eisenstein insists that a concept of gender "has got to include some direct relationship to the issue of power" (1991:111). It must include a place for gender as the site of struggle and resistance, incorporating the subjective. It is time to move beyond ideas of sameness and difference she argues, focusing rather on fluidity and its shifting and contextualized meanings. Gender is a process and a tool of domination whose definition is ideological and integrated into social institutions and discourses as taken for granted knowledge. Gender is an example of "meaning in the service of power" (Thompson, 1990:7).

That meaning is also embedded in capitalism as an economic and political mode of relations. Connell (1987:104) argues that "Gender divisions are a fundamental and essential feature of the capitalist system--arguably as fundamental as class divisions." It is within social institutions that gender is continually reproduced. Institutions are formed by habitual patterns of behaviour and the hegemonic assumptions lying behind them. Connell argues that it is possible to define a "complex" of social institutions "where the power of men and the authority of masculinity are relatively concentrated" (p. 109). While many men do not subscribe to the existing gender order, they do continue to benefit from it (Kaufman, 1987; Connell, 1995; Seidler, 1994). They benefit from women's subordination because it gives them access to a greater array of occupations, higher income, and to not being held responsible for their emotional life or for the care of their children. This advantage is like an undertow which works against the changes many men and women want to, or think they do, support (for example, see LaRossa [1995] on the myths and reality of the new fatherhood, or Drakich [1988] on the Fathers' Rights movement).

The gender order is perpetuated because it is located as an ideology within structures of power. Foucault (1977, 1978) recognizes power as something which is a permanent part of all societies. He argues that it is needed in order to constrain individuals sufficiently to make interaction and communication possible, but it is negative in that it limits individuals, and can be arbitrary and unjust. Foucault connects power with knowledge, the ability to define what is truth through expertise made credible by such institutions as professional associations having the right to approve practitioners. Meaningfulness results from power operating in social practices, and power in the modern world is reproduced in continual social interaction. It has a "capillary form of existence" which permeates the individual's body and mind, Foucault argues. Social control is no longer overt and public, but rather acts through "the gaze" which may be the gaze of the expert who is diagnosing, categorizing or judging an individual or group, or the interactive process through which messages about correct behaviour and beliefs are conveyed and reinforced.

Foucault did not consider gender as part of this controlling gaze, and yet the policing of peers in schools, teen, women's and sports magazines, and the messages of authority figures such as parents and teachers continually work to reinforce expected feminine and masculine behaviour (for example, Davison, 1998). The messages are internalized and become part of a concern with the presentation of, and the gendered performance by, the self. Schools reproduce this capillary form of power, and in girls' schools it takes on a particularly contradictory meaning since the schools are established to combat gender hierarchies, but are founded on gender, and are themselves typically hierarchical. At the private school studied in this research in particular, the staff believe in authoritarian structures and discipline as a route to self-discipline and the inculcation of a work ethic. Thus they give messages to the girls about learning to be independent in an organizational structure which demands conformity. Connell (1987) notes that in a private girls' school which he studied in Australia, a shift in hegemonic femininity occured. A new headmistress and staff changed the program, altering the context of the peer culture from one in which social prestige was the basis of the peer culture order, to one in which academic performance replaced it. School structures have an impact on how the students perceive themselves and what traits they value.

Along with conceptions of gender roles, the media, in such forms as television, films, magazines, self-help books and more recently, the internet, transmits perspectives on success and failure in a capitalist economy. Education, in this view, is a means to an end. It is the acquisition of skills and attributes desirable in the work place, such as a work ethic. It is also the means to success, which correlates with wealth, power, and for men, sexuality. Power and wealth are eroticized (Connell, 1995; Singer, 1993; Buchbinder, Forbes, Burstyn & Steedman, 1987; Hartsock, 1983), with men as the powerful, and women as the erotic. Hartsock (1983) argues:

> To the extent that either sexual relations or other power relations are structured by a dynamic of domination/submission . . . the community as a whole will be structured by domination. (p. 155)

Later she writes that:

> The gender carried by power in the modern world . . . leads to the domination of others, domination of external nature, and domination of one's own nature. (p. 210)

Media messages reinforce notions about control of the body, the self, and sexuality, and for males, control of females, eroticizing this image as a symbol of success. In 1992 the Christmas catalogue of stores in West Edmonton Mall was published with a picture on the front that symbolized this view of success. A young and good-looking male model stood center page, on each arm an identically dressed and coiffured, blond, slender, beautiful and sexualized young woman. These are models of women who will not be in charge of others, much less themselves, and yet at the same time, as models, to be on the front cover of a catalogue such as this is one step toward a successful career as a model, as the idealized female.

Control is central to these messages, as it is central to the goals of the girls' schools, symbolized by their uniforms (Joseph, 1986). Girls are to put their sexual desires on hold, to control all impulses except the will to succeed, since success is safety. But this is a safety which both contradicts the messages of subordination to a man, and also the messages *to* men. These girls are to be independent, self-sufficient, successful on distinctly male terms, not sex objects, and not subordinate. Clearly the media messages are being contradicted, but at the same time supported, especially in the private school which emphasizes subordination of the body to the mind, and subordination of the mind to school authority, in a context where many male characteristics are validated, but the girls are also to retain their femininity. They are still subordinated to the masculine ideal. School uniforms can be seen as highly symbolic of this ambiguity, which is not unique to this school. In the next section I explore sociological analyses of their meanings.

Uniforms

Many occupations require a uniform, which enables the outsider to identify someone by their status and role in an organization (the doctor and the nurse, for example). Most private schools and some special programs in the public school system also require that their students wear a uniform. Both the schools in this study had a uniform which was composed of a "number one" or formal outfit of kilt and shirt, with a jacket at the private school, and a sweater at the public school. Both also had a less formal uniform of pants, shirt and sweater. The uniform was justifed as egalitarian and easier to put on, less distracting. However, in his book on both uniform and nonuniform clothing, Joseph (1986) points to the importance of clothing as a means of communication. It is, he says, a sign used to convey meaning. Signs function at different levels, denoting membership in a group, creating an emotional impact, and turning the wearer into a status, rather than being an individual. Many uniforms work also as metaphor, for example the wimple worn by Catholic nuns was once the head gear of widows. Nuns were declaring themselves to be like widows--at the time considered to be asexual, humble and dependent.

Uniforms imposed on children, Joseph argues, often are part of complex social relationships, and may also be metaphorical. A uniform lends itself to a variety of controls. In uniform, students are visibly identified as members of their school, making it possible for the public to become part of school disciplinary structures. The uniform can also be viewed as a display of loyalty to the organization, inculcating a sense of pride in membership. It is a group emblem, and certificate of legitimacy. School uniforms are associated with the status of a private school. Students in the schools I studied were often called "snobs" when wearing their uniform in public, and resented that. They wanted to be equal while wearing clothing that said they were not. They also complained that it did not allow them to express themselves--it denied their individuality while establishing them in a particular status role. It is as a socialization device that the uniform is most interesting to this study. Joseph argues that uniforms for boys were originally a disciplinary measure, pulling them back from "mischief" through their visibility but also through the status into which the uniform put them. This might equally well apply to girls.

The uniform for boys marks them as future succesful men. It is the hallmark of the hegemonic male, the business suit with pants, jacket and tie (Craik, 1994). In some schools it has had a more military look. The wearer is clearly subordinating self to the group, but is also marked as working toward a future position as an adult. The girls' uniform is more ambiguous. Pants are usually either not allowed, or only within the school buildings. Skirts, usually pleated, or tunics, are the preferred uniforms for girls, although they are often worn with a shirt and tie. Girls' uniforms incorporate the masculine, playing down femininity and any display of the body, but at the same time they problematize gender by not being fully equivalent to the boys' uniforms. It is a feminized masculinity, with tailored skirts or dresses and jackets. Heyward (1995) argues that these uniforms infantalize girls, making them less credible. Craik (1994) argues the message is asexual and somewhat ambiguous reflecting the conflicted goals of schools which aim to produce high achieving and feminine girls. But it is also a message of control, through the attraction of the public's judgemental gaze, the self-identification with the school, and through the "mortification of the self," that is, the denial of individuality as expressed in clothing.

Uniforms are as symbolic of school authority as of an alternative to the distractions of fashion and the presentation of a sexualized self by adolescent girls.

The uniform symbolizes uniformity in its very name, and is an enforced dress code which can become a site of resistance (Heyward, 1995). Rizvi (1993) argues that:

> The initiatives that focus only on greater educational opportunities for girls overlook the issue of how these opportunities are structurally constituted through various gender regimes. (p. 211)

If the gender regime of a particular institution incorporates obedience, that will undermine goals of independence and critical thinking. In a girls' school, authoritarian attitudes have the potential to undermine messages of "being anything you want to be," and also of encouraging resistance. In fact, both the public and the private school parents regarded the uniform as a "safe" way to express resistance, and were glad it was there to provide that avenue, because they believed it would allow the students to let off steam without really rebelling against the school's codes.

Summary

This chapter has discussed two "families" of gender theory. The first focuses on sources of gendered characteristics and behaviour. It takes gender for granted, and explores the ways in which it is acquired or learned. Theories based on biology, and on socialization and the learning of sex roles are the basis of many popular articles in the media, and have become part of the tacit knowledge of parents and educators. Those theories, however, tend to ignore the intricacies of the social context, missing underlying and hegemonic messages in the construction of gender in Western societies. Further, they do not problematize gender itself.

In girls' schools, wearing a uniform can be seen as symbolic of the contradictions inherent in the goal of segregating girls to give them more confidence, in order to have them perform better within existing, gendered, institutions. The uniform incorporates elements of the masculine and the feminine, and can be seen as both conferring status, and as infantilizing the wearer (Heyward, 1995). These contradictions become part of both individual and institutional narratives of the gendered self, interpreted differently by each individual acting within that institution. Early psychoanalytic theory argued that normal development incorporated a specific gender identity, but later social constructionist theories posit gender as a site of conflict for the individual. The self becomes a site in which contradictory messages are reconciled to a greater or lesser extent with previous experiences and understandings, and with ideas about the social order and how that individual wants to be perceived in it, and is willing to accommodate its demands. As with the individual, institutions also respond to the actions of individuals and groups, and over time affect compromises and shifts in thinking which may lead to social change. Sometimes the contradictions become an opportunity for unique responses to be heard (Mahoney & Yngvesson, 1992). Schools, for example, have a different perspective on their purposes and goals now than they did at the beginning of the twentieth century, when there was more emphasis on authority and control. New voices are being heard on addressing sexism and racism in the classroom (Kendall, 1996; M. Sadker & D. Sadker, 1994).

Male dominance is more than the structured power of a patriarchal order. It is deeply embedded in the individual psyche in understandings that accept the male as standard, as the norm by which all else is measured. Those understandings also incorporate a view of the feminine as both necessary to the work of mothering, but inferior when compared to men. They are understandings which permeate the social order in expectations and assumptions embedded in social policy, in economic structures, in the family and in education. Accounts of femininity, Connell argues (1987), omit power and authority. If a woman takes up a position of power and authority, therefore, she can be feminine or authoritative, but not both, and in either case may not be taken seriously. I argue that adding women in through segregated education can be viewed as setting either the school or the girl up for failure, because it does not address androcentrism, and reproduces the gender regime it is set up to combat.

The term "ideology" is used here as "meaning in the service of power" (Thompson, 1990). Social construction theories offer a more nuanced insight into the actions of parents and schools who are addressing perceived problems in the schooling of girls. A belief that gender is a natural product of biological sex, is dichotomous, and should be maintained, sets up its own contradictions. Mahoney and Yngvesson argue that contradictions are the site of individuality, of the construction of the resisting or conforming self. In trying to adjust sex roles to social, and specifically, family and economic realities, parents and schools may be developing a new model of femininity, to be integrated into the gendered identity of the students. In other words, contradictions may lead not just to moments of freedom allowing the individual to develop unique ways of responding to social pressures to conform, but contradictions may also open up possibilities for social change. Perhaps the demands of present day capitalism (that is, the possible impacts of the labour market and future job prospects on their daughters) and their implication for gender roles (Connell, 1995) may be leading parents and schools to develop a new femininity, aimed at equality between the sexes. At the same time, the social construction of difference, and the processes of "doing" power as well as gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) cannot be ignored. If sex roles are seen as in need of redefinition, and the gendered identity of girls as needing adjustment, that perception is embedded within structures permeated with power (Eisenstein, 1991) and operating within a social context of androcentrism (Bem, 1993).

In the next chapter I turn more to the practices of gender, including a general discussion of schools, and arguments about the role of gender in education. This is the social context within which two schools for girls were set up with a goal of improving the academic performance of girls and increasing their chances of success in later life. This chapter will also examine the reasons given by parents for their choice of a school, and some of the research on single-sex, and on private schools. It concludes with a discussion of attitudes to feminism. In chapters 5 through 7, I describe and discuss the explanations and narratives which emerged in my data. Chapter 5 compares the two schools, chapter 6 describes the concerns of the parents and chapter 7 gives the views of the girls themselves.

CHAPTER 3

AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS: GENDER IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

In the preceding chapter I discussed social construction theories, which I argue can suggest some theoretical directions for thinking about the goals of girls' schools. This chapter concluded with an analysis of uniforms, which offer a symbol of control, but also of the struggle to redefine the feminine by including traits considered masculine, without masculinizing the young women concerned. In this chapter I focus on how gender has permeated and informed the practices of education, and describe how these practices, and changes in the economy, have led to the opening of girls' schools or programs, and to their selection by parents. I begin with a discussion of priorities and debates in education which form the backdrop for the founding of the two girls' schools.

The Development of Formal Education Systems

Writers on the history of education have characterized it both as having a focus on social control, and as having a focus on social mobility, two views that are not necessarily contradictory. Attempting to shape how students behave can be done to make them obedient workers, or to motivate them to achieve, as is the goal of the schools in this study. Titley (1990:2) argues that:

> Schools are not neutral; nor have they ever been. They teach approved behaviour, speech patterns, beliefs, values and forms of knowledge which are presented as normal. In reality, however, the curriculum, whether hidden or overt, is derived from the dominant class. Educational orthodoxies, then, are not the result of some haphazard process of trial and error but are determined by those wielding power in society and with specific purposes in mind.

Thus when social mobility is needed, when more skilled workers are required, for example, there is greater emphasis on skill development and educational achievement, often backed by more funding for education.

Social control is expressed differently for males and females, even in supposedly coeducational contexts. Good citizens and good workers have gendered roles to fulfill. In segregated schools, the need to establish respectability has led in the past to repressive control over the girls' lives, especially their sexuality, but also to conflict between the "good wife and mother" role and the intellectual, socially mobile young woman headed to university (Gordon, 1990; Gathorne-Hardy, 1977). Prentice (1994) documents the recurring thread of control over sexuality in schools. Girls were kept busy in order to keep them distracted from their sexuality and away from boys. Boys were made to take cold showers, and sent out onto the sports field in order to sublimate and redirect their sexual energy (Gathorne-Hardy, 1977). Attempts to accommodate femininity led to what McCrone (1993) calls "double conformity" or "divided aim." Educators valorized men's academic and athletic programs at the same time as they incorporated the "constraints of womanliness" in their programs. Levin and Young (1994) argue that still today school goals can be logically incompatible when they promote, for example, teaching an ability to think critically and make decisions, but also values of obedience to authority and respect for expertise. Those goals are also gendered, since girls are expected to be more obedient and boys more critical.

An ability to think critically and make independent decisions is one of several characteristics seen as important in social mobility in today's society. The social structures of education and work are permeated by a belief in meritocracy--that Canadian society is an open class system, in which those who make it "to the top" do so through motivation and hard work. Public schools today are frequently criticized for a perceived failure to ensure proper study skills, a work ethic, self-discipline, and achievement-oriented attitudes in their students (Barlow & Robertson, 1994). At the same time, however, they are expected to make up for the failings of the families whose children crowd their classrooms. Classroom size has been cast as one of the problems, although some educators argue that it is not size but resources that count (Gaskell, 1995). Fullan (1993) argues that in fact education is itself fundamentally conservative. School structures, he argues, impede efforts by teachers and administrators to change their delivery styles and content of curriculum, and change which does occur is often unplanned. At the public school which was one of the cases in this research, administrative structures were key in shaping the eventual delivery of what had been planned as an innovative program.

Schools are also under attack for failing to provide society with skilled workers. The emphasis is not on learning for its own sake, or to develop thoughtful and involved citizens, but to provide the types of skills needed to keep businesses competitive and profitable, and by implication, the economy healthy (Titley, 1990). Barlow and Robertson (1994) agree with Titley that schools have always been vehicles for a political agenda. (This is an agenda blending social control with social mobility. While school children are taught to be obedient, they are also told that the rewards of their hard work and self-discipline will be seen in their future careers). The political agenda currently focuses on a concern for cutting government expenditures and increasing the global competitiveness of corporations. The social safety net has become a luxury. Consequently, schools are the site not only of training for a competitive labour market, but also for acculturation into future gendered adult roles without the same depth of social services to back them. With the reduction of the welfare state, individuals are expected to take on roles previously held by government. For example, childcare, elder care, and the care of the sick are now laregly relocated in the family, primarily seen as women's responsibility (Dacks, Green & Trimble, 1995; Taylor, 1994). These are expectations which parents incorporate into their views of the future for their daughters, and wish to strengthen them by inculcating a work ethic, self-confidence and a drive to be self-sufficient. Parents' criticisms focus on the failure of the schools to give their daughters the skills they need to survive, not on the social and economic changes which make them vulnerable, for example, to poverty and to conflicting responsibilities. Schools are criticized for being themselves "inadequate businesses" say Barlow and Robertson (1994). They are seen as uncompetitive, poorly focused and unadaptive to changing conditions. Because schools are distant from consumerism, Barlow and Robertson argue, they can be seen as out of touch with societal needs.

Further, the authors argue that it is middle-class parents who are given the advantage in being able to influence the way in which their children are schooled. This is particularly relevant to single-sex schools most of which are private. Childhood is becoming one long pre-job preparation experience, and our children are increasingly test driven. Barlow and Robertson also argued that parents are being positioned as consumers of education, looking for the program that will best advantage their child, and often judging it by standardized test results. As parents are increasingly allowed to select the schools for their children, schools compete with each other for students who bring with them tax dollars. Schools then run the risk of becoming vehicles for parental interests.

Schools are instruments for the dissemination of ruling relations (Smith, 1990a). As such they express values about the purpose of education and about goals for students. These range from achievement in particular fields such as science and math, to personal characteristics such as competitiveness and individualism. Understandings of the role of education by parents and students are permeated with hegemonic ideology and learned from a number of texts, including the media. Those understandings, according to Connell (1987, 1995) and Lorber (1993), are also permeated with gender.

Parents' Choice of Schools

When parents bring together their tacit knowledge about gender, about schooling, and about the economy, they may opt for a single-sex school. Parental choices of secondary school have been shown to priorize factors such as academic standards, location, having other family members at the school, facilities, and for their daughters especially, single-sex (West, David, Hailes & Ribbens, 1995; West

& Hunter, 1993; Thomas & Dennison, 1991). Watson (1996) found that parents choosing a single-sex school wanted to remove their daughters from the distractions of boys, including interest in, and harassment by them. This was priorized over social skills in mixing with boys, because school performance was seen as more important to the future of the girls. It was more important that they establish a career before becoming sexually involved. Watson (1996) argues that "The processes by which school choices are made may be viewed as a discursive field through which girls and their parents must negotiate their way" (p. 116). In listening to that discourse, gender is likely to be present, but not necessarily central to the narrative. Assumptions about gender are deeply rooted and often unconscious. For example, it may be axiomatic to the parents that girls require greater protection than boys.

Research from England and the United States, where girls' schools are more common than in Canada, finds that gender is not high on the list of priorites when parents select a school for their daughters, although it is almost always present. A list of preferences in the choice of a secondary school for either sex, established by David, West, and Ribbens (1994) includes, in order of importance, the school is near to home, siblings went there, it has a good reputation, the parents like what they saw/know about it, know children there, it has good academic results, the child wants to go, it is single-sex, it has been recommended, it has good facilities, it is a local school, there is a parent/relative link and it is a church school. "Single-sex school" was more likely to be given as a reason by parents of girls than of boys. Other research indicates a similar list, although the order of importance fluctuates (West, David, Hailes & Ribbens, 1994; West & Hunter, 1993; West & Varlaam, 1991; Thomas & Dennison, 1991; Hunter, 1991).

Some ethnic groups show a higher interest in single-sex schools, but in all cases it is daughters more than sons who are most likely to be sent to a single-sex school. Some reasons for this recorded by West, David, Hailes and Ribbens

(1995) include:

> I think that to go to an all-boys' school you've got to be quite tough. It's the stereotype I have and I don't want James to be in that situation. I don't see him as a real boys' boy.
>
> She'd be better with no boys around. She'd be better getting on with her school work and then she could cope with boys when she's a bit older. (p. 32)

Both of these speakers are being protective, but one describes the decision in terms of other boys, and the second in terms of the opposite sex--boys. In both instances it is boys who appear to be the problem. Watson (1996) interviewed three couples, examining their assumptions and priorities about gender and schooling. In this article she focuses in particular on the construction of femininity in relation to heterosexuality. The couples she interviewed seemed to want to remove the distractions of boys but at the same time did not intend to remove their daughter from all contact with boys so that they lost their social skills. The daughter's enrolment in a girls' school is not to interfere with her "normal" heterosexual development. The daughters, on the other hand, see a girls' school as a "kind of sanctuary away from the behaviour of boys" (p. 119). Their view of distraction focuses on the freedom to get on with their work. Watson's work highlights a contradiction inherent in girls' schools. There is a tension between the assumption that the girls should be and will be attracted to boys and the understanding that the girls need removal from the tension and harassment experienced in a coeducational school:

> Somehow, the girls' desires must be transformed via the hetero-sexual imperative from a desire to be away from boys, to a desire to be with them.At the same time as the girls (and their parents) believe they will and should become attracted to boys, the consequences of this attraction are seen as potentially dangerous. A tension is set up between sexuality and intellectuality whereby the expression of one will be at the detriment of the other. (p. 119)

Watson argues that sending girls to a single-sex school as they enter adolescence can be interpreted as a means of silencing their resistance to the harassment of boys by re-focusing them on academic achievement. In other words, by removal from the distraction of boys, they do not learn to resist their dominance, but only to get on with their work. On the other hand, Watson says, a single-sex school may provide a safe environment for the voicing of resistance, and for analysis of how gender and heterosexual relations are produced. Parents and their daughters may select a girls' school for reasons that may or may not be supported within that all-girl environment. This is what I refer to as "cloistering," which can be done to protect, but also to keep girls away from boys.

Academic quality and discipline appear frequently in studies of parental choice of school, sometimes also in relation to class and school size. Discipline is of greater concern for boys than girls, but a study by West and Varlaam (1991) in England found that a fifth of the parents interviewed mentioned discipline. Thomas and Dennison (1991) carrying out research in an urban area of England found that when parents rejected the school preferred by their child, that rejection was based on the greater attractiveness of the alternative choice. "Perceptions about discipline and the enforcement of a policy on school uniform were more important in this context" (p. 246). In other words, it was only when parents disagreed with their child that these issues came to the fore. However, the association of discipline and the enforcement of a uniform reaffirms arguments about uniform advanced in chapter 2.

Education as the Site of Gender Construction

Education as a vehicle of social control, and as an instrument of ruling relations, necessarily conveys particular attitudes to and beliefs about gender. Connell (1993) argues:

> The dry sciences of academic abstraction involve a particular institutionalisation of masculinity. Masculinity shapes education, and education forms masculinity. (p. 200)

Schools express a masculine "take" on both teaching and knowledge. Nevertheless Klein and Ortman (1994) claim that:

> Individuals working toward gender equity in education have been successful in identifying overt barriers (e.g., sex differences in course enrollments) and subtle barriers (e.g., peer pressure to conform to stereotyped expectations) that contribute to sex discrimination and gender stereotyping.

But these authors also acknowledge that these changes have been very slow. For example, women who become educational administrators are not encouraged to change the male dominated environment in which they find themselves.Young (1990) comments that "Change is occurring, but at a distressingly slow rate in some parts of Canada." Rhetorically, she asks if that change will be a question of "fitting more women in" or of reformulating the structures of educational administration. If the administration of education remains based on a masculine model, then it would hardly be surprising to find this reflected in teaching practices also.

The Loss of Self-Esteem

Pipher (1994), Orenstein (1994), Gilligan (1990), and others have found a loss of self-esteem among girls reaching puberty. They argue that the hormonal changes of adolescence, and the transition to junior high school are difficult tasks for boys and girls, but that for girls the difficulty is compounded by heightened gendered messages which now take on new dimensions with new interests in sexuality, and for heterosexual girls, in boys. Girls who have achieved well in the primary school lose ground in junior high, getting lower grades especially in math and science, and dropping out of physical activity beyond what is required. Lloyd and Duveen (1992) argue that it is not the academic performance of girls that is affected in primary school by conceptualizations of gender, but their concept of self. By the time they reach adolescence, that knowledge of self as being part of a group occupying an identifiably different place than boys in the educational system translates into lowered academic performance.

Even in elementary school, performance differences are present. Ellis (1993) comments on a video-taped school project in a Grade 4 class in which single-sex groups of children engaged in an exercise designed to encourage creative thinking attempted to answer the question "How do you catch a 222-pound chicken?":

> Every parent or teacher these girls have had should weep. The boys happily jostled each other for centre stage in front of the camera. The girls attempted to withdraw, looked at the floor, or said "um" more than anything else. (p. 368)

Surveys carried out by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (1990), by Janelle Holmes and Eliane Silverman for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (1992), by Maureen Baker for the same organization (1985), and by the American Association of University Women (1992) all found that young women feel pressures and limitations to which boys are not subjected. They worried about being popular, about doing well in school, and about how to manage family and career after school. Such understandings put a brake on their career aspirations and self-esteem (McLaren, 1996). Schools, Heyward (1995) argues, are one of the most important socializing agents, and responsible for a continuation of the gender regime which she defines as:

> The pursuit, conscious or unconscious, of a pattern of practices that creates an acceptable kind of masculinity and femininity among the members of an institution, ranks them according to status, and then divides labour within the institution on the basis of sex. (p. 190)

One of the "most obvious" elements used to maintain this regime, she argues, is the school uniform. Basing her discussion on the practices of a private school at which she has taught for some years, Heyward argues that strict rules about dress in Victorian girls' schools were a way of protecting the young women against "damage to their social purity" (p. 193). When they began to do sports, standardized clothing was introduced that was less physically restrictive, but which then developed into a socially restrictive uniform which became an end in itself.

The uniform also became part of a demand for unquestioning obedience to authority. Its disguising of the feminine figure, lack of sex appeal, and almost childlike appearance undermine the students' credibility, Heyward argues:

> Oddly enough, while the unform continues the nineteenth century legacy of denying feminine sexuality, thereby maintaining the girls' social purity, it seems to contradict this same legacy in its lack of disapproval of women dressed in men's clothing. In fact, it emphasizes the masculine image through the requirement of a school tie, a long-sleeved button-down Oxford cloth shirt and very masculine-looking black Oxfords. The message being suggested is that feminine sexuality is a shameful thing, that intellectual pursuit is a masculine attribute, and that academic success is achieved only by imitation of the "superior" male. (p. 195)

However, Heyward also comments that a new, more feminine uniform introduced for the Junior School may indicate a move away from "adulation" of the masculine. The school uniform is confirmed in her research as symbolic of not only discipline and control, but also of the prevailing construction of femininity.

Teachers and Curriculum

Within the school, research on gender has found that often without knowing it, teachers reproduce sex-related differences by a focus on the boys, and an acceptance of differing behaviour among boys and girls. The Sadkers (1994) have carried out research for 30 years at all levels of education, including postsecondary, finding that at each level, teachers, curriculum and texts perpetuate stereotypical views of gender. Men are active, physical, strong, risk-takers, competitive and aggressive, in this view, and primed to enter the world of paid work and of danger ranging from their occupation itself to war. Women are primarily cast as objects of beauty and sexuality and as mothers, those who do the work of caring. In such a stereotype, there is no room for women as knowers, and as academic (or sports) achievers.

The Sadkers (1994) found that curriculum focused on areas most of interest to boys, such as wars in history, sports in math problems, or cars in physics. Further the language of school texts is male-centred. Action words and events crowd pages rather than relationships and emotional content. Heroes are male, and girls are subordinate to them in texts and novels (Gilbert & Taylor, 1991). Teachers treat boys and girls differently--they give most attention to the behaviour of girls while saying that boys are the most disruptive in the classroom. Boys are seen as better learners and more intelligent, in spite of grades that often reflect the contrary. Girls who do as they are asked, and work hard, are penalized by male and female teachers alike, who tend to grade boys more favourably (Bannister, 1993). In fact, it is as likely to be the teachers as much as the students who are responsible for discrimination.

Adult responses to the denigration and silencing of girls focus mainly on their lowered performance in math and science, subjects that are seen as having high priority in terms of accessing good employment and of making a contribution to society. Bannister (1993) records that this lowered performance is not absolute, however, and may be as much the result of teacher expectations and attitudes as actual ability. As well, assessment is based on the reproduction of concepts rather than on real understanding, and is couched in "male" language both in structure and content (Measor & Sykes, 1992).

An article by Boaler (1997) substantiates this claim in an examination of underachieving girls in mathematics in England. A view of them as deficient, as needing to become more confident, and more masculine, is an insufficient explanation for underachievement, Boaler argues. Her research found that not only do girls have a different approach to learning which affects their performance, but also that they are aware of structural constraints that limit their achievements. The girls she interviewed wanted to understand the math, to be able to think about it. While the boys did prefer a more open approach that allowed them to understand math, when it was given to them as a set of rules and exercises to be done in a predetermined period of time, they focused on completion and did not worry about understanding. They disliked working in groups, for example, because it slowed them down. The girls preferred working in groups because they could work things out together, and became frustrated, and slowed down, when they did not understand the work. They understood that their anxiety over getting the work done had to do with the type of mathematics they were doing, not the nature of math itself.

Bannister (1993) argues that the socialization of girls into conformity means that they do not challenge the rules, and are less articulate than boys, which is then interpreted as evidence of less intelligence and ability. In spite of this evidence, however, statistical differences in performance between girls and boys are quite small. Bannister found that girls generally did as well as boys in classroom tests in the sciences and math, for example, but their performance dropped on standardized tests. This suggests that standardized tests incorporate a more masculine structure which intimidates or confuses girls. As Walden and Walkerdine (1985:46) argue "the social relations, teaching, and learning in *specific* classrooms are of considerable importance in accounting for test attainment." When math is taught in an open format, allowing for questions and discussion, both boys and girls perform well. When it is taught in a closed, exercise-based format, the boys become competitive and continue to do well, but the girls fall behind (Boaler, 1997).

Students and Peer Culture

Gendered messages come from both teachers and from other students. Boys harrass and abuse girls in junior high school especially, rating their looks and denigrating their abilities physically and verbally. School becomes a hostile environment (Orenstein, 1994; Pipher, 1994; Kostash, 1987). A *Globe and Mail* (Galt, 24.10.95:A5) article based on a report from the Ontario government in collaboration with the Ontario Teachers Federation reports that 80% of girls said they had been harrassed by the time they reached high school. That harrassment included having their bodies "rated" by boys as young as nine, and having those ratings yelled out or posted on placards. In one Ontario elementary school a group of Grade 7 boys terrorized the girls by snapping their bra straps and making derisive comments such as "you want it bitch." But some 40% of those who were harrassed stated that "it was no big deal, lots do it." It was just part of school life. They normalized the behaviour as did the students in the schools I studied. It was "just the jerks" who did it. "My friends" or "my brother" were different, they said. They wouldn't do that.

Larkin (1994) associates these kind of remarks with what she calls "lesbophobia." In other words, assuring the listener that boys are not to blame, and that "their" boys are different, is a protection against charges of being lesbian. She argues that this drives girls further into an acceptance of male dominance and aggression, including harassment. It is not girls' self-esteem which is their problem, Gilligan (1990) argues, it is what leads up to the loss of it. The constant barrage of comments wears them down, so that they internalize the voices, and are constantly aware and waiting for the next attack. The girls in Larkin's study saw the behaviour as a kind of male posturing that they had to live with. The fact that it is one extension of what is seen as "ordinary" or natural male behaviour makes it difficult to address, because it is difficult to separate it out and label it as harassment, Larkin writes.

The peer culture, at all levels of education, but particularly in junior high, can be harsh, and in coeducational settings is marked by gender. Boys verbally and physically harass the girls (Pipher, 1994; Orenstein, 1994; Measor & Sykes, 1992). They take up the most space and the most "airtime," demand teachers' attention, and are threatened if a girl out-performs them, especially in sports (Measor & Sykes, 1992; Ellis, 1993). Thorne (1993) found that boys are more likely, even in primary school, to be in a position of verbal or physical intrusion into girls' space, and to claim they were "just joking," whereas girls are more likely to reject this explanation. This asymmetry increases with age, resembling the structures of sexual harrassment, Thorne argues. Status hierarchies determine whose definition of reality will prevail. Girls are intimidated and silenced, as are any boys who do not want to be part of what Connell (1987, 1995) calls hypermasculinity.

Adler, Kless and Adler (1992) researched the criteria for popularity among primary school boys and girls. They found that for boys there was an emphasis on athletic and physical ability (toughness), and on being able to deal with the adult world--something they call "savoir faire." School was more important socially than academically for the boys, who denigrated the high performer as much as the low performer. For girls, on the other hand, high performance was an ingredient of popularity, although less important than looks, socioeconomic status and social development. The girl given more freedom by her parents was also popular. Boys, the authors argue, are succeeding through the internalization of masculinity, which requires distancing from femininity and machismo posturing--the embodiment of action and physicality. This is an orientation toward autonomy that is preparation for adulthood, they argue. Girls, on the other hand, are prepared for absorption into a culture of conformity, of adherence to a normative order, including romance and domesticity. However, the authors also point out that there is an oppositional element in this, since girls popularize achievement and boys conform to peer pressure to "do" masculinity in part by underachieving. The inconsistencies and contradictions of a gender order appear even in its formative phase, but at the same time, the ingredients for popularity are clearly marked not only by gender differences, but also by masculine dominance.

Thorne (1993) found inconsistencies among primary school children in how they "played" gender. She found boys were generally more hierarchical and competitive than girls. They played in larger, rule-organized groups, expressing both affection and anger physically rather than verbally. Rank was negotiated through insults, commands, threats and fights. Bragging marks the contested nature of their activities, Thorne said, whether it is about physical prowess, technical sophistication or "their" sports team. Organized sport itself became a metaphor for their social relationships. Girls tend to play in smaller groups, often pairs of "best friends." They have shifting coalitions, based on the need to have a backup for the instability of "best friends." Girls participated in several pairs at one time, and who was best friends with who could be a hot topic. Affection was expressed in touching, and in taking note of physical appearance. Play was more cooperative among the girls, and used less space.

Thorne warns, however, that a focus on the larger groups of children ignores the many instances of "crossing over" which occur and their importance in making claims about "doing" gender. She records boys who did not play sports, and boys who joined (and were allowed to join) girls' skipping games as well as girls who joined in with boys' sports. She found that the range of behaviours between the sexes was less than that within each sex, and that gendered behaviour was often quite momentary. Perhaps significantly, Thorne (1997) also has observed that gender differences showed up more when teachers were organizing activities in which the boys and the girls were segregated by sex.

It would be misleading to view these relations as relations of one-way power, or of completely male dominance, however. Girls can, and do, resist. Resistance is related to popularity and social skills, athletic and academic prowess. A popular girl, one with greater social power, is admired by the boys, and has an advantage (Adler, Kless & Adler, 1992). Thorne also observed girls using those qualities perceived as dangerous as a kind of weapon: if they have "cooties" then boys must be afraid of contamination. Eyre (1991) recounts how girls in a home economics class took power over boys defined as "not knowers" in this context. The girls quoted in the *Globe and Mail* (Galt, 24.10.95:A5) survey expressed both fear, and rage, that their schools had done nothing to stop the behaviour. The President of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, which was responsible for the survey, commented that one encouraging sign was that students themselves were demanding more information on sexual harrassment and clear guidelines within the schools.

Femininity, Motherhood and Careers

The end result of gender regimes embedded in the organizational practices of the school and in the peer culture, is that while some girls continue to perform well, many do not. Further, when asked about their future careers, girls reflect choices shaped and limited by their expectations in regard to marriage and children, while boys see their future as unlimited by the formation of a family (McLaren, 1996). McLaren argues that:

> Girls select, use, and appropriate various discoursive elements in order to make sense of their social contexts. As active agents, they may accommodate themselves to, but they may also resist, dominant definitions and meanings. (p. 280)

In her interviews, McLaren found that girls took several different routes to reconciling motherhood and a career. Some talked about wanting to stay home with their children, or said that "somebody's got to" and that men could not do it. The nuclear and privatized family provided a taken-for-granted context in which the ideology of motherhood was reproduced in what the girls saw as a desire to stay home with their children, and not to entrust them to strangers. This placed them in the position of having to plan strategies for how they could manage children and waged labour. One such strategy was to take on what McLaren calls "little jobs." These are jobs that were described as undemanding, not taking the mother away from her family, and not in areas such as science, math and business which were "big" jobs. Some saw themselves as establishing a career which they would leave and return to "when they [children] were in high school or something." McLaren notes that:

> Mothers are compelled to compensate for the public neglect of children. The dominant discourse of motherhood places the moral responsibility for childcare upon mothers, not upon fathers or upon the community. Moreover, within the changing economic context of "post-industrialism" and "restructuring," "thinking jobs" is realistic. In recent years, obtaining a career has become, more than ever, a mark of privilege. (p. 287)

Some of the girls recognized the difficulties of returning to a career, and problematized motherhood. They might say that women were not held as responsible for the children as they once were, that they did not have to stay home for as long, that employment was important, and that even it would protect them from getting lazy through staying home with the children. Some expected that their partner would take on childcare responsibilities also, or when they expected to have a demanding career, that they would hire a nanny. Others said they would not marry. They resisted the dominant discourse of marriage and motherhood, and in fact could see its dangers to their aspirations and independence. Whereas the boys in the study saw no conflict between work and home, the girls constructed a future in which they had to make decisions either of doing both, or of choosing one over the other.

The differential class impact of a desire for school success versus a desire for motherhood is traced by Lucey, Walkerdine and Melody (1997). Middle class girls' school achievement is generally taken for granted, and their future careers are the focus of parental expectations. While they are as sexually active as working class girls, if they become pregnant, parents are most likely to pressure them for an abortion. Pregnancy is seen as jeopardizing the priorized career. When a working class girl achieves in school, parents are delighted and encouraging, often because she might be the first in the family to go to university. However, the girls are more likely to get pregnant, keep the baby, and drop out of school than middle class girls. The authors suggest that for the working class girl the costs of further education are too high. Going to university may be a marker of high status, but it removes the student from her community, and leaves her without her main support system. Faced with such a choice, the girls drop out and turn to mothering as an accepted and supported role for themselves within their community.

Higginbotham and Weber (1997) researched upwardly mobile Black and White women whose family of origin were middle or working class. They asked about family expectations for educational attainment and career or occupation, finding a range of responses. However, many echoed the goals of the participants in my own research. For example, 190 of the 200 women interviewed recalled a parent stressing the importance of a good education, and of going on to get a degree, which all of them had done. They found that the White working class women were less likely to have received such support, but 86% had still said it was there for them. A second theme that emerged was that fathers would tell their daughters they were to do better than their fathers had done. "Each generation should do more than the one before," said one father. And a respondent said, "They wanted me to have a better life than they had." But parents also expected their daughters to marry. "They expected me to have a good-paying job and to have a family and be married. Go to work every day. Buy a home. That's about it. Be happy." Higginbotham and Weber found that 70% of White middle class and 56% of White working class women had parents who stressed that an occupation was needed for success. "You're going to get married but get a degree, you never know what's going to happen to you" was a common comment. Although the women had mostly experienced support for a career over an occupation, it was less strong. Getting into an occupation was priorized over a career path, by parents who still thought that marriage and children would be a significant part of their daughter's future. As I read this article, I mixed metaphors by thinking that it sounded as if the parents wanted their daughters to have a security blanket, but not to make their own bed. Further, when they shared a bed, it would be with a man, and children would follow for which they would be mainly responsible.

Single-Sex Schools

Single-sex schooling has been one possible answer to equal educational opportunities for girls, and the encouragement of ambition/achievement. In the nineteenth century, the major reason for segregation was cloistering to protect the virtue of the girls. Single-sex schooling has recently reemerged in response to the above reports of sexual abuse and harrassment in coeducational schools, loss of self-esteem and failing in school. Taking girls away from the dominance and distraction of boys appeals to parents and teachers (Schultz, 1991). In the novel *Lives of Girls and Women* by Alice Munro (1971), a mother and daughter are talking:

> Don't be distracted. Once you make that mistake, of being--distracted, over a man, your life will never be your own. You will get the burden. A woman always does. (p. 147)

Jimenez and Lockheed (1989) found that single-sex learning (in segregated classes or schools) is more effective for girls than boys, who do better in a coeducational setting. Further, they found that the differential performances in math which they researched were more likely due to peer "quality" effects than anything inherent in the classroom organization, that is, the experience of separation led to better peer relationships and a wider range of peer experiences which enhanced the school climate. They state that they were unable, with their data, to explore how this was achieved, but that other studies suggest leadership opportunities for girls are not available in coeducational settings, and not as available for boys in single-sex settings. Leadership opportunities have an impact on self-confidence and therefore on performance. This may link to findings that it is classroom atmosphere which is most crucial in academic performance. Perhaps if students feel validated as individuals, in whatever capacity (as leaders, academics, or sportspeople, for example), they will perform better than they do in schools where hierarchy incorporates denigration.

Heather-Jane Robertson (1997) argues that single-sex schools, which are mostly promoted for girls, not for boys, are problematic. She points out that segregation on any grounds conflicts with other principles such as equity. She also points out that it is no good dealing with issues such as loss of self-esteem in one sex, without addressing the underlying issues with both sexes. In other words, single-sex schools address the symptoms not the problem. Further, she quotes Kenway and Willis (1990) as saying that measurements of self-esteem may be assessing the extent to which an individual has identified with "male, western, middle-class individualistic values, and that we might usefully ask if we want girls to have more of the same" (p. 5). Robertson argues that the task is to create classrooms that "nurture everyone" not just girls. M. Maxwell and D. Maxwell (1994) found that over a twenty year period the graduates of two elite girls' schools, one Catholic and one Protestant, had shifted to an expectation of employment throughout their lives, and that they were priorizing traditionally high status male occupations as their ideal.

Single-sex schools do appear to offer girls safety, as well as a feeling of being special, that enhances their academic achievements also (Riordan, 1994; Brutsaert, 1994). However, some research by Richardson (1993) suggests that gender stereotypes are stronger in single-sex schools, particularly among males, and that coeducational schools have greater potential for breaking down those stereotypes. Separating girls and boys is likely to reaffirm differences. The research by Riordan, Brutsaert and Richardson suggests that single-sex schools are a positive experience for many girls, but much less so for boys, and that they also have negative impacts. A response to that might be to see them as a temporary measure, or as some headmistresses said to the Maxwells (1995), needed only until there is no more sexism in society. Although most single-sex schools in Canada are private schools, the Maxwells' research suggests that they face the same issues as those in public schools, and their positive and negative outcomes offer insights into what might arise in public as well as private single-sex schools.

Private Schools

Private schools are responding to changing markets. These include both social and economic changes. Socially, the increasing importance of cultural capital over wealth in advanced education has led to the schools competing for the students showing the greatest promise from academic ability to leadership, intiative, motivation and creativity. These students tend to be the "cream" and continue to be high achievers after graduation. The vast majority of these schools were until recently single-sex, because this was considered the most valuable and appropriate for future success. Economically, however, the period from the 1960s when government funding was poured into public schooling led to a decline in enrolment and increased pressures on the private school budget. The Maxwells (1995) report that in 1993, an inspection of 16 girls' schools which had survived this economic crisis showed a differential investment compared to the boys' schools. The standard of their facilities was below that for the boys. Historically there has been less willingness to endow girls' schools, so that when private school enrolment fell, the girls' schools lost more and made less of a come-back in terms of capital than did the boys. Maxwells' (1994, 1995) research on what happens when some of these schools go coeducational for mainly financial reasons must be seen in this context. Further it suggests that the opening of a private girls' school in Alberta at a time when others are amalgamating with boys' schools in order to survive demonstrates a considerable act of faith.

Added to financial difficulties were changes in attitude to single-sex schooling, and a refusal by many students to attend single-sex schools. Further, the schools themselves began to be run in a more democratic, rather than authoritarian manner. A basis of community responsibility replaced many of the old, more doctrinaire approaches. These changes created an environment that was also more "conducive" to coeducational schooling say the Maxwells, and this was further strengthened by growing fears of homosexuality in boys' schools. However, beyond the financial, the benefits for the girls' schools of going coeducational were far more doubtful than for the boys. The Maxwells found that in the boys' schools the addition of girls tended to improve academic standards among the boys, and to change the school climate in positive ways. For the girls' schools however, the lower level of facilities often meant that they gave up their own buildings and land, losing with that much of their culture and organization. In every case of amalgamation the position of headteacher was taken by a man, and far more women teachers were laid off than men. In 1993 not one head of the thirty-three coeducational independent schools was a woman, and four of the remaining eleven girls' schools were headed by men. Several of these schools still have more boys than girls in the student body, but at the same time the greater prestige and better facilties of the boys' schools has allowed them to attract some of the top performing girls from the girls' schools. Together with the loss of their traditions and culture, this led one headmistress of a merged American prep school to describe the process as "rape" (M. Maxwell & D. Maxwell, 1995). While this is a strong statement, the experience of going coeducational has mirrored the prevailing structures of social institutions and serves as a reminder of the modern reasons for the support of segregated schooling for girls.

Although boys' schools attract some of the top performing girls, within the girls' schools the Maxwells found that both principals and students in schools for girls reported, as a measure of their success, higher enrolment in math and science, a greater willingness to take risks and to participate in class, and the development of leadership and executive skills not usually available to girls in public schools. As the Maxwells point out, these are hardly objective views, but they are congruent with other research findings that girls do better in a single-sex environment (Lee, Marks & Byrd, 1994). They have female role models in leadership, administrative and executive positions in the school, they have a better chance at athletic funding and at excelling in athletics and academics because the sexism is removed. They are an affirmative action plan for girls' education.

The comment that girls' schools are needed until there is no sexism in society is germane here. In their conclusion, Maxwells (1995) point out that boys' schools that go "cosmetically coed" may be contributing more to the reproduction of gender inequality than its ending. At the time this article was written, most were closer to tokenism in their female enrolment than full coeducation, they say. Indications of greater sexism in single-sex schools are stronger in boys' schools (Richardson, 1993). Lee, Marks and Byrd (1994) found in a comparison of single-sex and coeducational schools, that while incidents of teacher sexism occured less often, the greater comfort level in a single-sex environment magnified those messages to the students. In their most serious form, the writers say, male teachers' comments in boys' schools actively encouraged boys to view women as sex objects, and even to expect to have control over them. They also found that:

> The proportion of sexist incidents initiated by teachers was also somewhat lower in coeducational than in single-sex classrooms, probably because of the presence of the opposite sex, which may inhibit magnified sexism. (p. 107)

They found only one incident of denigration of males in a girls' school, and that was followed by a discussion of "male-bashing."[1]

Single-sex schools for girls, however, report better academic and sports achievements, greater confidence among students and access to a wider variety of leadership experiences. On the other hand, separating girls out continues a message of gender difference, and reinforces that difference by promoting a culture based only on girls' interactions. It would appear that the solution to the problem of the denigration of girls creates problems of its own, perhaps because it does not address the underlying issue of the illusory and ideological nature of gender itself. This is further demonstrated in attitudes to feminism by supporters of single-sex schools, as recounted earlier in the introduction to this dissertation, but also by girls themselves.

The Paradox of Attitudes to Feminism

Although many girls are willing to speak out about the harassment and denigration they experienced in their schools, they do not want to be seen as antagonistic to boys generally. Being feminist is seen by many young women as dangerous, male-bashing and male-alienating behaviour, at a time when they want to be acceptable to the boys (Higginbotham, 1997), and not, as Larkin (1994) argues, seen as lesbians.

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[1] I think it important to note that "female-bashing" is not part of our vocabulary. Denigration of females has a different set of labels which reveal a separate set of values for females.

The complexity of attempting to change the attitudes of girls, and to "add them in," is illustrated in an article published in *MS* magazine recently (December, 1994). English and women's studies professor Lisa Hogeland suggests that to understand women's fear of feminism one has to draw a distinction between gender consciousness and feminist consciousness. One measure of feminist success is that gender consciousness is very high, she argues. It takes two forms--a celebration of difference, and an awareness of vulnerability. But a link from gender consciousness to feminist consciousness requires the politicization of the former. Young women fear politics rather than feminism itself, because they fear reprisals. There are powerful interests opposed to feminism, Hogeland argues, and these young women may believe that identification with feminism puts them, for example, out of the pool for men:

> It is not in the interests of many individual men or many institutions that women demand a nonexploitative sexual autonomy. (p. 19)

Feminists should not forget both the hard work of becoming a feminist, and the risks that entails, she argues.

In the (unpublished) thesis written for my Master's degree in 1990, I interviewed women living in a resource industry town. Most of these women had taken on the town's predominant culture of outdoor-oriented living, self-sufficiency and independence. Very few, however, considered themselves feminist. Many said that they did not "need" feminism. That was for women who could not manage by themselves, in their view. Feminism could help women who were victims, but they were not victims. This is a rather different "take" on anti-feminist views than those given above, and yet reflects another possible explanation of why women who are, or aim to be, self-sufficient and independent do not support the women's movement. Girls in single-sex schools in particular, such as the private school whose recruiters I talked with, the schools of the present study, or the school described by Heyward (1995), are taught that they can be self-sufficient and independent. They do not need the women's movement, which is often characterized as too strident, too aggressive and demanding, and not feminine.

Education, Family, Work and Gender

Parents and their Daughters

Parents have been shown to control their daughters more than their sons (McRobbie, 1991; Kostash, 1987; MacDonald & Parke, 1986), and this has an impact on how they insert themselves into teen cultures (McRobbie, 1991). The choice of "teenybopper" idols, for example, allows young girls to have their own tastes and fantasies without "breaking the rules." They remain close to home. Research by Eskilson and Wiley (1987) and others shows that daughters remain closer to their parents, and are more dependent on them for approval and support than are sons. Parents are therefore another important source of self-esteem for girls.

Parents are mainly responsible for school selection, although this shows some class-based differences in which working class girls are more likely to have a strong say in school choice. As reviewed above, a number of studies (West & Hunter, 1993; Hunter, 1991; West & Varlaam, 1991) show that the basic concerns of parents revolve around the quality of the school, specifically in regard to academics, discipline, good exam results, and for girls, proximity to home and single-sex. The greater control of daughters is linked with a more protective attitude toward them. The presumption of greater fragility in baby girls (in fact boys are the more vulnerable to disease and genetic weaknesses) lingers on in adult responses to young women, backed by statistics of harassment, abuse and rape. They are portrayed as more vulnerable, more easily influenced, and more likely to be sexual targets (Pipher, 1994; Orenstein, 1992; McRobbie, 1991). West, David, Hailes and Ribbens (1995), carrying out research in England, found that parents preferred their sons to attend a mixed school, arguing that the presence of girls had a "civilising influence." But for their daughters, a single-sex school and smaller classes were better. The civilizing influence would not be their own daughters.

Family Changes and Choices

Shifts in family organization might be expected to influence the way in which young people view their future lives as both workers and as parents. For example, in Canada now more mothers are employed than stay at home, and the numbers of single-parent and blended families have increased. Further, there are fewer children in most families (Ward, 1998). However, this appears to have had limited impact on how young people plan their lives, or on their attitudes to sex-related roles.

McLaren's (1996) research outlined above demonstrates the complexity of attitudes among adolescents toward who will care for children and how this will be done. She found that integrating the importance of work with their thinking about a possible future as spouse and parent, indicated that "discourses related to domesticity and waged labour are not static and monolithic but complex and entangled" (p. 281). For example, most of her participants talked about the tensions of mothering and employment, but not about those between being a wife and employment. This works to conceal the tensions inherent in "wifehood," she argues. Those who saw themselves staying home with their children denied any connection to social pressures, claiming the idea as their own desire. But McLaren also found that the young women "did not just use a 'language of desire,' fulfillment, and choice when they talked about staying home with their children. They often talked about 'having' to do this." (p. 283). Somebody has to stay home, and for many reasons, the mother was best.

Clearly, there is not one view of how gender, family and work can be organized, and the way these young women "do" gender is varied. Their responses seem to be prescient of the research of Ranson (forthcoming), who interviewed professional women deciding to have or who had children. She writes that:

> Educational choices and the occupational opportunities which followed seemed to exert a considerable influence on the timing of the transition to motherhood. (p. 21)

Postponement of motherhood, and even of marriage itself, most often followed the choice of a career which proved more difficult to pursue. Women who believe while in university that they can have it all, Ransom argues, find when they are in their chosen career that this is not easy, most especially if they are in a non-traditional occupation. She found that those who were in an occupation, such as teaching, which allowed them to take maternity leave, and which had hours most compatible with childcare, were more likely to have children and to have them at a younger age than those in careers such as science or engineering. Teaching was seen as a career that allowed maternity leave without a career penalty, and which left the mother free to be at home when school was out. Consequently, these mothers were also more likely to continue to work full time after having children. While socialisation has an impact on the decision to have children, "the organisation of work materially affects reproductive decision-making also" (abstract). What is important to note here is that, as Ranson argues, if the structures of work remain unchanged, young women cannot "have it all."

Economic and Employment Changes

Since the 1970s, an increasing number of mothers have become part of the paid workforce (Vanier Institute for the Family, 1994). Further, reports from Statistics Canada (e.g., McKie and Thompson, 1994) show that there has been a feminization of poverty. Families need two incomes to survive, and women alone, because they earn less than men and are more likely to be single parents, are particularly vulnerable. Within the family, roles are changing, and most couples are now dual earners, with mothers being the fastest growing segment of the labour force (Ward, 1998). While this has led to greater equality in dual-income marriages (Vogler & Pahl, 1994), women still carry the bulk of responsibility for child care and household organization (Marshall, 1993; Hochschild, 1989), regardless of the number of hours they work. Further a new attitude to fatherhood has been shown by LaRossa (1995) to be at present a culture of fatherhood that is ideological and not empirically supported. Fathers are more likely to play with their children than to clean up after them, and as Mackie (1995) writes, "when family interaction is closely examined, the fractious nature of domestic life stands revealed (p. 52). Fathers are more likely to "help" with housework in very limited and specific ways. Consequently, most mothers work a "second shift" (Hochschild, 1989).

As well, women alone are more likely to be poor, particularly when they are single parents or are elderly (Ward, 1998). The stress placed on families by the deteriorating job market is a contributor to divorce, exacerbating this situation (Finnie, 1993). Mothers have custody of the children in over 80% of cases, often because fathers are unwilling to take on the care of their children (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). These authors also point out that some 75% of non-custodial fathers, for a variety of reasons, fail to keep up child-support payments. It should not be surprising, therefore, to find that children from single-parent families have significantly more problems, not due to the sole parenting, but due to increased poverty, the need to relocate to accommodate a lowered income, conflicts around the marriage break-up, and the loss of a loved parent whose removal from the daily life of the child is often experienced as rejection (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Family and Work

Some companies now recognize that work stress is more often connected to outside responsibilities than to workplace issues (MacBride, 1990). As an increasing number of households contain either two people working outside the home, or one person attempting to support the household both economically and emotionally, that stress mounts. Parents making choices about schools will be aware of those pressures, if not actually experiencing them, and may try to "proof" their daughters to insulate them from the results. A good educational performance opens doors to higher education and better jobs, giving choices that can allow for greater control over the organization of family life.

The economy in industrialized nations is "globalizing" and shifting to one in which an increasing number of jobs are non-standard (i.e., they are not full-time, permanent positions carrying a benefits package). In Canada, manufacturing jobs are in decline, taken over by automation and by shifts of production to developing countries. Government cuts to public services and contracting out, combined with a shift to more non-standard jobs (Empson-Warner & Krahn, 1992), has meant the loss of career opportunities and access to better paying jobs for many women (Harrison & Laxer, 1995; Taylor, 1994), while at the same time they are generally the ones expected to pick up the slack in providing services previously offered by the government such as care of family members released earlier from hospital (Dacks, Green & Trimble, 1995; Taylor, 1994). While unemployment, underemployment and insecure employment all put pressure on workers to gain skills and experience in high demand (Reich, 1993), married women and mothers are at risk of being pushed, due to family responsibilities and to lower income, beyond the reach of either on-the-job training, or of access to further education. Education in particular is positioned as key to a strong labour market position.

Education as Protection and Source of Change

When it is clear that either due to the job market or due to divorce, women are more vulnerable to poverty than men, parents who are already protective of their daughters are likely to priorize education over marriage as a way to gender proof their daughters and make them secure. Parents wish to ensure that none of their children are hurt by the shifting economy, however, including job loss, and job insecurity, but for boys the priority may be more on access to a high status career as well as on job security and income (Heward, 1988). Education has been portrayed in the media, and shown statistically (Altonji, 1995) to have a buffering effect. The more education (particularly in specific fields), the more likelihood a young person has of having, and keeping, a job. Consequently, parents priorize education for their children, as they have done since the beginning of public schooling (Axelrod, 1997).

A recent article suggests, however, that more education and greater involvement in paid work leads to new roles and socializing experiences which create greater gender consciousness in women. In turn, that heightened consciousness leads to greater awareness of women's inequality and support for the equality of women and for feminism. This is particularly true of younger people. However young men, who are also supportive of equality, believe that women now have the same opportunities to do well as they do (Everitt, 1998). Thus one might expect graduates of girls' schools to be more focused on a career, more supportive of feminism, and more aware of the structural inequalities which constrain them. At the same time, young women who want to find a permanent heterosexual relationship, find themselves in a difficult position, since to express a feminist consciousness incorporates an accusation of blaming men, or at least of criticizing male dominance. To become part of a heterosexual couple is in some sense "sleeping with the enemy."

Summary

Schools have traditionally incorporated goals of both social control and social mobility. Presently, they are being criticized both for not inculcating the skills and attitudes needed in the workforce, and for not having a sufficiently disciplined environment within the classroom. Fullan (1993) argues, however, that the nature of school organizational structures works against change. Attempts to change gender relations within schools by segregating on the basis of sex might therefore be limited in their effectiveness due to oppositional forces, but also to their androcentric foundation and perspectives (Connell, 1995; Bem, 1993).

Not only is there criticism of public schools, but parents are also trying to select a school in an environment in which the economy and family structures are perceived as undergoing rapid change. They want their children to do well in school, because they know that academic achievement is linked to better employment futures. At the same time, they accept gender ideologies which define their daughters as less competitive and achievement-oriented than boys, and as losing more self-confidence in the adolescent years. They are more protective of their daughters than of their sons. Worried about the futures of their daughters, they may select a single-sex school to remove them from the distractions of boys, and to encourage them to focus on their school work. Watson (1996) argues that when they do this, parents set up a tension between their desire for heterosexual development, and their desire to delay sexual activity in favour of career development. For girls, however, the move is seen more in terms of freedom from boys.

Robertson (1997) argues that it is middle class parents who are more likely to support single-sex schools. Research from the United States (Lee, Marks & Byrd, 1994) supports her contention, but Canada is less class-conscious than the United States. Support for single-sex schooling might therefore be less class-based. Any decision to send a daughter to a girls' school, however, is based on gender, and tends to reinforce gender difference both in its focus on the deficiency of girls (they lack self-esteem, or their school performance is falling off), and in its focus on segregation. Further, such a decision reinforces the power of parents and schools to control girls, as well as giving the message that characteristics seen as male are to be incorporated into femininity for greater success inside and after school. Male dominance is perpetuated (Watson, 1996) and male superiority affirmed through this action.

Many studies have demonstrated the loss of self-esteem and confidence in adolescent girls (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Holmes & Silverman, 1992, Baker, 1985). Larkin (1994) and Robertson (1997) attribute this loss to the sexual harassment and denigration which girls experience in schools. It would seem to be more than their treatment by boys which silences girls, however, since teachers, texts, curriculum and classroom practices all send messages of the inferiority of women. Young women internalize these messages, which have an impact on how they plan their futures. Those plans are reinforced by social messages that they are the ones responsible for their children (Sydie, 1994; McLaren, 1996). At the same time they are being told to do well in school because this is the key to a better future. They are being told they can "have it all" (Ranson, forthcoming).

Single-sex schools are seen as one way to combat low self-esteem, but single-sex schools reaffirm androcentric values as well. And as Robertson argues, quoting Kenway and Willis (1990), the measures used to guage self-esteem are also androcentric. Boaler's (1997) findings in regard to teaching mathematics support the argument that it is classroom practices that are key, rather than segregation. Girls' schools offer a different climate, which in turn leads to different teaching practices. Girls' schools do not have to address the underlying issues of male dominance and androcentrism, however. In fact, they may support them through affirming the superiority of some male characteristics, and through failing to address male behaviour and sexism, especially as it is embedded in social structures. Further, they do not have to question gender itself.

To summarize, there are contradictions inherent in girls' schools. First, by being founded on gender, they reinforce and reproduce difference. Second, by identifying girls as deficient, and utilizing characteristics designated as male to make improvements, they perpetuate the conceptualization of the feminine as inferior and unable to stand alone, while reinforcing male superiority, and through that superiority, the right to dominate. Third, to the extent that they retain hierarchical organization and practices, they reproduce inequality.

School selection by parents is based on such factors as class size, academic performance, and distance from home. Where they do include gender, it is in terms of removal from the distractions of boys, and better school performance. Studies of parental choice have not focused on parental *constructions* of gender. It seems clear that there are contradictions in parental decisions to support a school for girls. How do they perceive femininity? Do they accept difference and so validate the gender order but still want their daughters to hold a higher position in it? What are the processes by which they arrive at a decision to support a school for girls? The contribution of girls' schools to constructions of gender will be shaped by parental desires for their daughters, since the schools need sufficient enrolment to stay open. As well, if parents are viewing gender, rather than their daughter, as the problem, they might be expected to want the school to encourage resistance to the gender order in its students. If, on the other hand, they are seeing femininity alone as the problem, what construction of that femininity do they want the schools to inculcate, and to what extent does this desire mesh with the goals of the schools? These are important issues, and yet very little research has incorporated these questions.

In chapter 4 I discuss the process leading to my selection of two all-girls' schools for instrumental case studies, how I gained access to them as a researcher, and the research design and process. One of the often unexpected rewards of qualitative research is getting to know individuals one would not normally encounter. I describe some of the conditions under which such encounters took place, and the responses of those interviewed to being asked to participate. Chapter 5 focuses on the schools, describing and comparing their organizational structures and founding principles. Chapter 6 discusses the views of the parents, revealing little difference between those in the public school and those who selected the private school. Chapter 7 introduces the students. Whereas the parents were often quite obtuse in what they were discussing, seeming to skirt around issues, students were far more direct, and so their voices are featured more in this chapter than those of their parents in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODS

The gap in sociological research on gender which this dissertation seeks to address is to ask why parents and students involved in two particular schools chose a public or private girls' school. To what extent does their decision reflect the concerns of educators, or other concerns such as those about the future lives of the girls or ideas about femininity? A major focus of this research is on the thinking process which leads to a decision that the daughter will leave her co-educational environment and friends to attend a private or public all-girls' school.

These questions are the "foreshadowed problems" with which I enter the research and begin to formulate new issues. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) cite Malinowski (1922) as the first to use this term. It refers to problems or issues which have been identified by the researcher prior to field work, and which are then refined, rephrased or changed based on data collection and analysis. Research becomes a reflexive process in which the researcher moves between questions (issues or problems) and the data. Often foreshadowed problems are phrased as questions which ask "why"? In this case, the research is asking why the founders of the schools decided on a girls' only program, and why parents and their daughters selected those schools. One answer would be that girls do better in a segregated environment, and the parents want their daughters to do well in school. But this begs another question. Why do girls do better in a segregated school, and why do parents want them to do so? These questions were incorporated into the initial data collection. As the research progressed, however, it became clear that there were far more reasons why the participants became involved. Thus more questions were posed as the research continued, but the original ones were also refined and rephrased. If parents wanted their daughters to do better in school, what was it that they were aiming for? And if they were aiming for a career, what did that mean in terms of potential motherhood?

I could have approached this research at different levels than the ones which I chose. For example, I could have asked what constructions of gender led the school board to accept the junior high school program under its umbrella, what were administrators expecting, and how did they view the program? Or I could have examined all known literature on the performance of students in sex segregated schools to see how boys and girls compared in their academic performance and general personal characteristics such as a work ethic. But to answer my question "why" really required directly asking those who had made the decision. What led administrators and teachers, parents and students, to see a girls' school as the best choice? What were the steps in their decision-making processes that led to that point? Consequently, rather than studying the phenomenon at the institutional level, I focused on the actors involved, and the school setting which they developed, or into which they inserted themselves.

Our modern language does not allow for inclusive language when referring to the singular generic. I have therefore decided to use "they" and "their" rather than the non-inclusive "he" or the rather clumsy "he or she" used by some writers. "They" and "their" have the validity of having been the commonly used generic form prior to the formalization of grammatical structures in written rules.

The Significance of Two Recently Opened Girls' Schools

When two girls' schools opened in Alberta, they offered an opportunity to address these questions. The schools were based on premises specifically addressing ideas about girls and femininity, and concerns about what was happening to girls in the public education system. They wanted to respond to reports on the decline in female students' academic performance in junior and senior high schools, with programs designed to combat that decline through self-confidence, good work habits and a general change in behaviours and characteristics which they associated with the adolescent girl. Thus they offered a unique opportunity to focus on the social construction of femininity within one specific context--that of single-sex schools.

The schools also have specific physical, political and policy boundaries. One is a private school and therefore differentiated from public schools, but also from other private and Christian schools in that it is for girls only. At the same time it is an independent (not for profit) and Christian residential and day school, similar to other such schools, other than in some unique aspects of the curriculum, and its all-girl status. It is governed by Alberta Education policies and funded partially by the provincial government. The second school is a junior high school program, located in a public elementary school and subject to the principal of that school and to River City School Board policies and funding applications. While it is under the administrative structure of the elementary school, it is housed in a relatively segregated area of the building and is clearly identifiable due to its girls-only policy and its uniform. It also offers a unique curriculum component. Both schools incorporate an element of women's studies, both require students to wear a uniform, and both are institutions with goals and policies which conform to provincial guidelines but differ from those in similar private, or public schools due to their girls-only status. In other words, the important differences between these, and other schools of a similar type, relate to the fact that they are for girls only. By doing research in these two schools, therefore, I could examine whether, or to what extent, their goals meshed with those of the parents and students, and what issues and concerns were motivating parents and daughters to select them rather than the available alternatives.

Research Design

The research questions seek to understand what the setting up of two girls-only schools *means* to those involved, and the research is appropriately inductive. Since it seeks to arrive at an understanding of meanings behind actions, it is necessarily more in-depth, or qualitative rather than quantitative. It needed to be open ended, allowing for an empathetic understanding and identification of themes or issues as they emerged. It is also an instrumental case study of two cases.

Cresswell (1998) argues that a case can be both the object of study or the method. Similarly, Stake (1994) also defines a case study as *intrinsic* or *instrumental*, the latter having either one or multiple cases (which he calls a collective case study). An intrinsic case study is one which is studied by a researcher who is interested in the case for its own sake or its intrinsic worth. A case can also be studied, however, as a means to an end, or for instrumental reasons. It is used to provide better understanding of an issue or theoretical argument. In this research I want to know more about how schools and parents are constructing gender, and specifically femininity. Two girls' schools offer an opportunity to do this. They are cases which I am using to explore the issue of gender. They are not collective cases, however, which would be studied jointly for examples of a particular phenomenon such as girls' schools in their entirety. As stated above, my interest was not in researching girls' schools, but rather, the rationale for their founding and selection, which included questions about why two new girls' schools were started at a particular moment in time and in a particular province. Nor did I want to know everything possible about either one of the schools. Rather, I intended to compare and contrast two cases to shed light on a particular issue--that of gender in the context of education and family decison making.

The use of two cases is valuable in that they offer two contrasting approaches to the segregation of girls. Having two quite different schools with the same stated goals of improving girls' self-esteem and school performance enables the researcher to compare and contrast how those goals are framed. Conceptualizations of gender, and its perceived importance to the lives of the girls could be identified and compared between the two schools. Two different administrations with two different philosophies (one secular and public, the other Christian and private), and two sets of opportunities and constraints formed by their location within provincial educational frameworks (e.g., funding, location, administrative accountability structures) provided an opportunity to identify how their administration problematized and responded to gender issues in education, how parents and students perceived those responses, and what differences and similarities existed between the two sites. Thus the research design is identified as a qualitative and instrumental study of two cases, each of which have identifiable differences and similarities which could be explored for their significance to constructions of femininity. For example, the Christian basis of the private school was one which echoed the "muscular Christianity" referred to in chapter 2. This philosophical base was absent from the public school. That generates the question as to whether the construction of femininity in the private school is significantly different from that in the public school. It was possible that in comparing the schools I might find two different rationales for segregating girls. On the other hand, if the two schools held closely matched conceptions of femininity, then rather than being unique phenomena, they might be indicating a shift in social constructions of gender, calling for further research. In other words, the findings would lead to more questions, whose content would be shaped in part by findings of difference or similarity between the schools.

Selection of Cases

As discussed above, the schools selected offered particular research advantages, and at the time of the study (1996-97) were the only two available in the province. Alberta now allows parents a choice of schools for their children and, in fact, encourages them to participate more actively in schools through school councils and through the possibility of setting up a charter school. Charter schools are schools which can be set up under provincial legislation by any group, including parents. They cannot be based on religion or on sex, but are intended to encourage innovative approaches while retaining supervision by the local school board or directly through the Ministry of Education. The girls' school which parents wanted to set up under this legislation would have been applied for on the basis of its unique curriculum, which could also be applied to boys, but was seen as of particular benefit to girls. The legislation was slow in being implemented, and the parents' group eventually agreed to become a special program under their local school board. However, their program, and those of the charter schools, were part of a larger context in which schools were placed in the position of competing for students, and through them, tax dollars.

In this education environment, both schools became the focus of attention by parents concerned about the educational performance of their daughters, and attributing that performance, at least in part, to their gender. Thus the schools acted as magnets, bringing together parents, students, and school administrators who were concerned about gender and education. They offered a unique opportunity for addressing the research questions.

Entry into Sites

The private school was opened in 1993, three years prior to the opening of the junior high school program and, in fact, parents planning the public school program discussed their ideas with the private school headmaster. My awareness of the private school began through discussions with a friend (who I will call "Mary"), whose eventual appointment as the school's Development Coordinator began with her volunteer work on its behalf. Her efforts to complete her degree while also working and mothering, and to be qualified to participate in the school, had become a major goal for her both personally and philosophically, and drew my personal support but also piqued my curiosity. With the opening of the public girls' junior high program, my attention became more focused on questioning the construction of femininity which was taking place. When I opened the possibility of the research with her, she invited me to visit the school and discuss the project with the headmaster. Once I was able to give assurances of confidentiality, and of a well designed, supervised research project, I was made very welcome.

The public school program initially came to my attention with a front page newspaper article about a group of parents wanting to set up a charter school. Something about the article caught my attention, and I kept it for several weeks thinking I might want to volunteer for them, hesitating due to my workload, but also to a lack of clarity as to why I supported the program. Later I realized the two schools offered me a unique opportunity to find out how parents and students, as well as the schools themselves, were thinking about gender, and constructing a concept of femininity. I phoned a parent who was a founding member of the group, and within a short period of time found myself participating as a semi-volunteer in a fundraising hot dog sale. Opportunities such as this came to be a familiar part of the research. I have both sold and bought hot dogs and hamburgers, handed out refreshments on a cross country race, provided a lunch for volunteers, done volunteer secretarial duties, joined in social events, and attended choral presentations, fundraisers and every year end ceremony.

Nonetheless, the two schools were very different in how they were organized, and in the interpretation by participants of what it meant to have a researcher in the school. While the private school was clearly focused on its task of 'building character' in the young women, it appeared to have a more fluid organization, and to have too few people to carry the workload. Consequently, finding a moment to interview a member of the school was frequently more serendipitous than planned. At the public school, on the other hand, the organization was more bureaucratic, but also fraught with tension from the disagreements between factions of parents. I think that this held several staff back from talking to me.

Methods of Data Collection

Document Analysis

I began to look for more information about the schools, but also about public debates on education, and particularly, the education of girls. My interest included media attention to these issues, since it seemed likely that the parents would be aware of media reports, and might even have based their decisions in part on this source of "taken-for-granted knowledge." I collected newspaper reports on education, and specifically on the education of girls, as well as media accounts of gender differences in adolescents such as self-esteem levels. I watched for media responses to the schools, and collected all of the publications issued by the schools themselves. In this way I was able to identify both what the schools claimed they were doing, and how they were perceived by journalists.

Many of the newspaper clippings discussed criticisms of education in general, and several focused in particular on issues regarding the education of girls. My two main sources were the local city newspaper (referenced as *River City News* to protect the identity of the schools) and the *Globe and Mail*, chosen for its easy availability in the city, and national coverage. Promotional materials from the schools included brochures, handbooks, and a newsletter from the private school, a newsletter and fliers and meeting minutes from the public school. The minutes were those of committees and general meetings of the River City Junior High Program Society, set up to provide support for the school, but also to oversee the development of the program. These materials highlighted the claims made by the schools--the ways in which they promoted their program as different from, and superior to, those of other public and private schools in order to gain support and enrolment.

I analysed these clippings, noting the main themes--what was discussed and in what terms--in a journal of the research process. When outside publications such as newspaper reports focused on one of the schools, the themes were noted on 6 x 4 inch cards, and filed with the data analyses. When analysing school publications, all of the themes were noted on the cards, colour coded by school and by speaker (with different colours for parents, students and staff). In identifying themes, I used key words such as "self-esteem" or "competition" that recurred with some frequency. During the research process and after analysis of the interview data was completed, I returned to these clippings to check for similarities or oppositions to themes raised by interviewees, adding these to my notes and card file, but also generating further questions for follow up.

This was not intended to be a detailed or in-depth discourse analysis. Rather it was a textual analysis used to assist me in identifying important themes in the concerns of those involved in the schools, and in media presentations of educational and gendered issues. The themes were then integrated into interview questions as part of an ongoing process or dialogue between published materials and conversations with participants.

Observation

Observation at both sites allowed me to broaden this sense of context by seeing how staff, students and parents interacted, but also to see the physical environment, the use of space, and the importance accorded to different aspects of the school's program, resources and facilities. At the private school I was welcomed into residence, and stayed for two to five days at a time, blending into activities as much as possible, including joining in classes. At the public school I was made welcome at parents' meetings and at special events, and was asked to give a talk about my research in most of the classes. Consequently I became a relatively well known figure at both schools, although more so at the private school.

Throughout this dissertation I use pseudonyms for the schools, the city in which or near which they are both located, and the participants, to protect the confidentiality of everyone involved. A discussion of this and other ethical considerations follows later in this chapter.

Christian Girls' School

In all, I made seven visits to Christian Girls' School (CGS), four of which involved stays of two to five days, during a period of just over one year from 1996-97. Most visits occurred during the summer of 1996. In addition I attended two craft sales, three year-end ceremonies including the celebration of the first and second graduating classes, and two fundraising dinner auctions. My involvement in the school also included purchases at sales, and donations of material goods such as a spinning wheel for their use. Occasionally friends and colleagues were invited to attend with me, including a member from the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta whose research has focused on the education of girls in junior and senior high schools, and who is currently researching several newly opened programs for girls within the public school system. This was an ongoing process in which I became a "friend of the school," at least partially integrated into its life.

School visits were arranged with the school's Development Coordinator, ("Mary"), who was also a personal friend. This made access to the school much easier for me, and also probably contributed to the less formal conversations and activities with all of the staff who were introduced to me by my friend and who made me very welcome. It also meant that I was able to engage in long discussions with my friend, but also with other staff, on the education of girls, and the place of Christianity in that education. I felt free to engage with them, openly stating my own perspectives and exploring theirs in dialogues that enhanced my understanding of the basis for the school.

All staff were required to be part of the ecumenical community, resident on the property year round. I stayed mostly wherever my friend was living on the school site, which changed over the course of the visits, but I was also sometimes housed at the other staff residence. Interviews and activities were spontaneous for the most part, occuring as and when the opportunity arose. For example, interviews with students took place around meal times or between classes, and one staff interview was conducted in the front of a truck as we drove to collect a large donation of bedding plants, and in the yard as we dug and loaded them up. At other times, however, I seemed to be an awkward appendage, hanging around a space where everyone else had lots to get done and I had time to spare. Being an observer, even one who is made welcome, can be difficult unless one has a clearly defined role.

One of the discussions initiated after I was asked to do a full supervisory role for one day at the student residence was the extent to which I could be used as a substitute in the care of the students. This raised concerns about impacts on the students' responses to me, since it placed me in a position of authority over them, and also about legal responsibility. It was agreed that I would not be put in a position of authority, but I was invited, with student permission, to run a class-based discussion of some readings in Canadian literature. For future researchers, my present view is that I would have been better placed as a "cook's helper" or similar role. In fact I did do a little office work for the secretary which allowed me to observe interactions in an office that students obviously regarded as friendly and supportive territory when they were feeling sick, homesick or otherwise stressed.

At the end of each day, and occasionally when the opportunity arose during the day, I made journal entries detailing both my observations and reactions. These journal entries were later analysed and the main themes, generally based on key words, noted in the margins. As with other texts, these themes were transferred to cards and filed. "Themes" here refers to any topic raised--this might be an issue such as a model of femininity which was emerging, or a word or phrase such as "building character" which had struck me, usually due to its repetition. They might also be a personal reaction to something, such as an echo of my own, single-sex, schooldays which occasionally provided flashbacks enabling me to empathize with a speaker, and probe further. These personal reactions also included times when I needed to question my understanding to avoid making too hasty a judgement of an event or practice in the schools. In organizing the themes, I noticed that my previous training as a professional librarian came in useful as I often conceptualized these themes as a hierarchical train of subjects leading from the specific (e.g. uniforms) to the general (character building). Such thinking enabled me to make connections between topics discussed.

River City Junior High Program

At the RCJH program, visits were more formal. Appointments needed to be made in advance, and rooms booked with the school secretary for interviews. The school was more organized but nevertheless welcoming, setting up a mailbox for me to receive newsletters, making a boardroom available for interviews, and giving me time slots for interviewing students. At the same time, a public school gives much less opportunity for an integrated role as an observer. The presence of a researcher becomes a formalized and purposeful event. As well, interviews were frequently punctuated by announcements over the intercom, which I found quite intrusive.

This school was visited approximately 20 times, with about half of these visits devoted to interviews. On one day I talked with students in three classes about my research, and on two other occasions visited to watch special activities. I also attended open houses, two annual general meetings of the parents' society set up to support the program, and many committee meetings of this same society. At these meetings I was introduced as a researcher, and was able to make notes during the meeting.

On frequent occasions at committee meetings, I would be approached for my views on issues raised there. Those questions gave an opportunity to find out more about how participants were thinking, but also led me to develop ways to avoid answers that took sides. A more neutral approach seemed to be to list what I thought those present were identifying as the issues to be resolved or the concerns and suggestions voiced, as a means of giving useful feedback. My concern was to avoid in any way being seen as supportive of one of the several factions which developed during the school's first year. These were also often times when more participants were recruited for interviews, however, and fiery committee sessions sometimes made for a great start to an interview. As with the private school, each set of notes was analysed for the issues or themes which emerged, and these were recorded on cards, colour coded by source.

The two schools made for interesting comparisons, since they were alike in some respects and very dissimilar in others. Each school gave me particular problems and assets in carrying out my work. In the public school for example, I could count on getting a room for interviews, but had to work around the many announcements interrupting the conversation. I also had to be careful to find out when meetings were held, as notices were sent home with the students, and therefore my membership in the society did me little good. Eventually the school secretary allocated me a mailbox for the newsletter. Overall I was welcomed, and for the first few occasions, introduced, at all society meetings. At the private school on the other hand, I was given the list of parents, and left to do whatever I needed to do. At times, staff and students almost had to be trapped into talking to me, not from unwillingness but from lack of time. The best way to begin talking to people there seemed to be to work alongside whenever possible. I will probably never forget the time that a request to talk to more students was answered by scheduling me for half-hour interviews, back to back, for most of one day!

Interviews

No understanding of meanings would be valid without asking participants for their individual views, and I completed over 60 taped interviews, including conversations with staff (administrative and teaching), students, and parents at both schools. Interviews averaged 90 minutes, but ranged from 30 minutes to 3 hours long. Interviewees were asked for an hour and a half, but were assured that they were in charge of the interview length and of what they were willing to talk about. Some of the interviews were done individually, and some in pairs or groups.

In my original planning I had envisaged having uniformly programmed interviews, in which I talked to individuals alone and later in groups. I was unsure how parents would respond to requests to talk with them individually, and decided to test that out as I went along. Early on it became apparent, however, that the organization and social structures of both schools were going to make it difficult for me to insist on any particular format in regard to inteviewing staff and students, and I decided to "go with the flow."

Reinharz (1988) points to a tendency among social scientists to regard as failure research methods which do not operate as planned, but argues that this can also be an opportunity. Allowing interviews to happen within the frame of the school or individual needs became part of the process of building an understanding of how structures and relationships worked. If the school provided me with a group of Grade 8s to talk with, I accepted. If students indicated a willingness to be interviewed, I talked with them on their own, most often at the school, but sometimes in their homes. Occasionally two or three friends would come together. It seemed to me that to have interviewees relaxed, I had to accept their organization rather than impose my own. Currie (n.d.) refers to this as a "non-manipulative and humble relationship between the researcher and the researched" (p. 13). My feeling was that I was invading their lives, and should follow their protocol. By so doing, I realized that I was also observing relationships in process. For example, friendships among students changed during the course of the research, giving me additional information on how they were based. Parents who insisted that either one would give me the same information when I phoned to discuss interviews, ended up having a discussion (on one occasion an argument) about their ideas during the interview. I regarded all of this as both context-setting and data for my research.

Format

A set of questions was taken into these interviews, but early on began to be used as a guide more than as a schedule. (Please refer to Appendix A.) Not all questions were asked, and sometimes very few of them were. Some were dropped or modified because they either were met with monosyllabic or no answer, or seemed to be setting off a specific response. For example, under "Future Goals" I had a question which stated "Feminism is getting a lot of bad press recently." This was modifed by dropping the word "bad." My use of the questions varied with the interviewee--if they were very conversational, I would use the questions mainly to keep the conversation on track. If they were very quiet, the questions were useful tools for prompting more discussion. The speaker's conversation guided the interview, while at the same time my questions were occasionally used to reset its direction. The underlying framework for the questions focused on what led the interviewee to become involved with the school, what they hoped to gain from it, and how they felt about it after becoming involved. This was followed by discussion of future plans or wishes for the students. Two questions which I used whenever possible were asking parents how they might react to the discovery that a daughter was pregnant, and how they might respond to the daughter's claim that she was a feminist. These were aimed at establishing how parents thought about motherhood in relation to careers, and to what extent they wanted their daughters to resist the gender order.

Some transcripts reveal moments when I appear to lose track of my research focus altogether, and become engaged in a conversation that wanders. However, although these times might seem unproductive, they did contribute to a general sense of informality and openness that I think added to the discussion and assisted me in locating the speaker in his or her social context. At times I also worried that I had led the conversation, revealing my standpoint by my use of vocabulary. It was reassuring to be asked occasionally "are you a feminist?" or "do you think a woman should stay home with her children?" At first I was ill-prepared for such questions. Even after having read Oakley's article on interviewing women (1981), those who "asked questions back" took me by surprise. Experience led to a tactic of either asking for a delay in my reply, or answering in ways that left openings for them to come in with other arguments. For example, I sometimes said things like "well I do consider myself a feminist, but I'm not sure anyone agrees on exactly what a feminist is!" or "I think it [staying home with children] depends a great deal on the circumstances."

Each interview was taped, and after the first few interviews, rather than brief notes, I kept a written account of the interview which approximated the typed transcripts. Since some of the tapes proved to be difficult to hear due to background noise, or in one instance, the size of the room, these notes were invaluable in deciphering what was said.

Description of the Interviewees

Teachers, parents and students varied widely. Among parents at the private school I talked with members of the legal profession, teachers and counsellors. I also met with tradespeople (men and women), farmers and others who were self-employed. In some cases, parents were working two or more jobs in order to pay the school fees. Teachers varied from those with several degrees to those with one, and their background ranged from years of teaching to those for whom this was the first permanent teaching appointment. The range of interests, skills and abilities among the students was similarly varied, and many were discovering this for the first time for themselves.

At the public school I encountered similar variety. Parents ranged from professionals to some who were students or on welfare. Here, however, there was a degree of tension between those with more education and income and those with less of either or both. That tension was reflected by the students, who varied as much as the students in the private school. The teachers in the public school on the other hand were more homogenous, most of them having had experience in the same public school system prior to applying for a position in this program. The length and type of that experience ranged from elementary to high school.

Noticeable by their relative absence were parents from visible minority groups. I talked to two students from Mexico and one parent from Africa who was a temporary resident in Canada, but with no Canadian students who were self-identified as being from a non-European background. By non-European I am referring to those who are generally not considered "White." Their absence from the schools needs further research, but could not be addressed within the framework of my own investigation.

The Role of the Researcher

Kirby and McKenna (1989) emphasize the importance of intersubjectivity and critical reflection in research. Intersubjectivity is defined by them as "an authentic dialogue between all participants" in the research process, which involves respect for each individual. Critical reflection demands that the social context be taken into account. Kirby and McKenna focus particularly on research among those marginalized in society, whereas my research seemed to place me with one foot among the marginalized and the other among the privileged. In some senses I seemed to be watching a struggle for survival in an increasingly precarious economic environment, which threatened those with relatively high status, as well as the families on the lower end of socioeconomic scales. This situation demanded my sensitivity to the concerns of all of those interviewed regardless of their present social position. It also demanded that I pay attention to that position as part of the context in which their decisions had been shaped. As the interviews progressed, I frequently found myself comparing one parent or couple with another. At one level I might be slotting them into overlapping socioeconomic categories, understanding their responses in their own context, such as financial worries, or fears for their daughters based on their own experiences. At another level I was noticing the differences of emphasis between those who were relatively wealthy and those who were not. For example, on the one hand, the parents did not want their daughters to lose their standard of living, and on the other, parents wanted their daughters to improve on what they had. For both, security incorporated income and life satisfaction. While issues of socioeconomic class were present in the study, class membership among the parents was too nuanced to use as a category for differentiating among the participants or between the schools.

I found my personal background helpful in "breaking the ice" during interviews and in understanding what my participants were saying. Coming from a family in which some members farm, and having run my own smallholding, gave me a framework for some understanding of, and talking about rural issues. I also am a graduate of single-sex schools, and was able to empathize with the students who complained about their social isolation. Perhaps most importantly I am a parent of two children who went through the public school system. Frequently I was asked how I felt about the issues, if I had children, and what I thought about all-girls' schools. This was difficult, in that I was concerned it could silence the speakers who perhaps opposed my views. At the same time, the work of Oakley (1981), Storrie (n.d.) and others has led to a recognition, even validation, of some subjectivity in the research process. Generally I countered with honesty, asked permission to respond later in the interview, or phrased my response in an open-ended manner. Questions about my personal self were answered immediately, and my perception is that knowing me as a parent and a student helped to informalize the interview structure, reassure any fears or perceptions of my having a higher status than my interviewee, and enrich the conversation.

Later in the interview, if my opinions became known, they often led to a lively debate which shed more light on the structures of thought among participants. In retrospect, I realized that understandings of what was being said, or what was happening in an interview, were frequently serendipitous in this way. For example, over a post-interview cup of tea, one couple asked what had led me to carry out this particular research. When I explained some of my background in the women's movement, and about reading gender in terms of asking how society might be changing, they began a discussion with each other on equality and feminism which gave me new questions to ask in later interviews and led to a theme based on attitudes to feminism.

My openness to ideas that are counter to my own is evident in the transcripts. I respond with a request for more information when a father says he wants his daughter to look feminine, or talks about the need to marry and have children while still young, or a mother talks about her belief that a mother should stay home with her children, and then indicates how she has felt a loss of identity since leaving work. These ideas are not entirely counter to my more multiple image of genders, but they suggest a lack of control by a woman over her own life that is hard to accept. Recognizing these tensions was a way for me to tag issues, to probe, and ensure I understood how the ideas were shaped and what they meant to the speaker. How an individual frames their reality, how they view the issues, is how I can find answers to my research questions. Keeping my eye on that, as well as being as open and honest as I was able, made it possible to become engaged, to enter into the lives of participants, and to begin to understand how they were constructing their sense of reality.

Interviewing Parents

When interviewing two-parent families, the parents were left to decide if they wished to talk with me together or separately. Most chose to be interviewed together, and it is possible that I lost some insights into differences between the parents' views through this. However, many of these adults were very busy working, parenting, and staying involved in other activities, and their time was clearly limited. Although dominance of the conversation by one partner seemed likely, this was often not present. When it was, it was not necessarily the male who dominated. The member of the household seen as knowledgeable about the children's education was often the mother. I facilitated the discussion, sometimes attempting to draw out the quieter partner, with varying success.

Because I was seeing myself as an intruder, someone asking for valuable time from the interviewees, I was often taken aback by the warmth with which parents welcomed me into their homes. Meetings took place in their own homes, in kitchens, dining and sitting rooms and out on the patio. Others took place at work sites, in their offices or my own, or at the schools. People welcomed me into their homes, their work and their lives. Some visits took me into rural areas of which I knew nothing, causing some amusement at times over my ignorance of rural road signs (range roads and township roads run in specific north to south or east to west directions) and their significance. On one occasion I was so lost as to arrive an hour late, and was still welcomed with incredible courtesy. On this occasion, as on others, I was sent home with gifts, as if it was I who was offering something, rather than asking for time and energy from them. Cups (more often pots) of tea or coffee were consumed, breakfast served, baking offered, recipes carried home, and even wonderful gifts such as bedding plants, grocery bags of home produce, a loaf of home-baked bread. It was I who was the intruder into their lives, and yet I was welcomed as if it was I who came bearing gifts. I often found the need to move on very difficult, wanting rather to maintain all these new friends, in spite of the impossibility (from sheer numbers and from the geographical diversity, as well as the time available to all of us) of doing so.

Both schools were helpful in making introductions to parents, and putting me in touch with students. Access to a complete list of parents was not available at the public school, as this information is held confidential. However, the school was exceptionally helpful in sending home with students a description of the research, together with a request for participation. (Please refer to Appendix B.) At the private school I was given a list of parents. The extremely small size of the school (at the time there were just 17 students) meant that there was a very informal, almost family atmosphere. I contacted parents by telephone or at school events. At both schools I was rarely refused an interview.

Parents were generally the easiest group to contact as well as interview. At the private school, however, some lived too far away (Mexico, for example, although I would have loved to go!), and one or two at both schools were so busy that an interview could not be fitted into their schedule. Sometimes parents who lived at some distance from the private school met with me at the school, prior to collecting their daughters for a home visit, or during an open house event.

Staff and Students

Talking with staff proved more difficult, mostly because at both schools they were working long hours, but at the public school there were also several sources of tension which might have discouraged staff from talking with me, such as parental disagreements over the curriculum. At CGS students were also kept very busy and I had a difficult time getting one who had sufficient time to sit down with me. My notes from interviews with staff and students record many abrupt endings as a recess bell went, or a staff person was called away at both schools. Nonetheless there were some rich moments--a staff focus group, a shy girl with insightful observations that helped me understand what other students were saying, watching a staff member teach a Grade 12 class.

Many of the interviews at both schools were conducted with groups of students. This is advantageous in that they bounce ideas off each other, but difficult for those students who are a little less outspoken. There were times when some appeared to be silenced by the group process. A few interviews were conducted with a pair of girls who were friends, and these worked well.

Focus Groups

When they were completed and a preliminary summary compiled, my findings were mailed to all participants who were invited to join me in focus groups or individually to respond to the summary. (Please refer to Appendix E.) Students, parents and teachers at both schools came to these group meetings, and some participants met with me individually. The focus groups both confirmed the accuracy of the summary, but also extended it, sometimes in surprising ways which added to the richness of the data. For example, a focus group of parents at the private school began discussing what they hoped their daughters would be like as adults. At one point I asked them if this differed in any way from their desires for their sons. They said at first that there was no difference. But then when I pressed them further, and asked if their sons could perhaps be more feminine, such as wearing skirts, the reaction was swift, strong, and negative. They laughed at themselves but admitted it was not comfortable for them to imagine their sons as more feminine. Further, while their daughters could become "grease monkeys," said one participant, they still should behave like "ladies."

Focus groups were held with separate groups of staff, parents and students at each school. The numbers who attended varied widely, but the groups were generally better supported at the private school. This was in part due to the captive nature of the audience, and in part due to the helpfulness of my friend, the Development Coordinator. For example, the school held a cross country run competition at which many parents were needed as volunteers, and Mary suggested I be there. It was a very cold day, so I arrived with soup and sandwiches which attracted parents to the kitchen and into a continuing conversation with a variable group of participants. At the public school, parents did not attend the separately run focus groups which were offered to them, but did join two informal discussions held before society meetings. Students at the public school did not respond well to the invitation, and only four attended the group. At the private school they were not given a choice! But nonetheless they were very courteous and joined in a discussion with enthusiasm. Despite the variable attendance, these discussions did assist in enabling me to check my understanding of what was being said and in some instances to enlarge on it.

Research Ethics

All participants who agreed to be interviewed were asked to sign a consent form, and parents of students were also asked for written consent for their daughters to participate. The consent form was accompanied by a written explanation of the research, the names of my advisors and their phone numbers, and a statement of confidentiality which outlined how their identity would be protected in my dissertation and in any papers based on my findings. (Please refer to Appendixes B, C and D for copies of these documents.) Participants were also told in advance they would be sent the summary of my findings, and invited to comment. The confidentiality statement outlined the procedures which were to be taken to safeguard confidentiality of participants. These included changing the names of the schools, and having one master list of participants linked to the tapes of interviews only by number, with the connection between a name or names and the number of the interview known only to the researcher. Tapes were heard only by the researcher, who also was solely responsible for making typewritten transcripts of the interviews. Thus the possibility of someone being able to identify an individual who had contributed to the research was made as unlikely as possible. I was also particularly careful when quoting well known participants, so that any direct quotes were presented in such a way as to conceal the identity of the speaker.

Data Analysis

Sixty interviews, focus groups, observations, journal entries and text analyses make for rich and complex data. I faced a difficult decision as to whether to turn to computer software (such as Nudist) or to work manually. Based on my limited access to the computer program, and on its limitations as relayed by users, I chose the latter. Nudist requires the compartmentalization of data in a way which my visual analysis did not, and it seemed more natural and comfortable to me to work visually and therefore manually. By posting conceptualizations on a wall chart, I could see the patterns that emerged and begin to visualize how they might relate to my research questions. However, as with entering data in a computer, this method of analysis also required careful recording of data.

I transcribed the interviews myself, typing them on my computer and following a format in which each line was numbered on the left hand side, running consecutively from beginning to end of each interview. The right hand margin was set at 2 inches to allow space for comments. Participants' conversation was indented once, and the interviewer's twice, thus making an easy visual differentiation between speakers.

Each transcript was then analysed, with the subjects or topics of the conversation noted in the right hand margin. As topics appeared recurrently, they were given titles such as "success" or "safety," and transferred to 6 x 4 inch cards, colour coded for the participant (green for teachers, pink for students and blue for parents), with each school initialled and filed separately. Every reference to a topic was entered together with the transcript number and line number. This led to the creation of one file for each school, colour coded by source of information and organized into themes or issues. It allowed me to trace quotations back to their source, so that I could check any that seemed doubtful for any reason - perhaps they did not fit with other remarks on the topic, or were less clear on a second reading.

Themes are the name I give to recurring patterns of conversation which have to do with my research questions. Each of them addresses issues about gender and about the education and the future of the young women who were attending the schools, or about young people (daughters or sons) generally. Theme, therefore, refers to more than a topic of conversation. A theme was identified as a recurrent pattern of thought, a concern or concept that was referred to in a number of ways. Often these were issues of concern to participants, such as "distraction "or "success." Sometimes they were descriptive of the social context such as "popularity" or referred to the source of an idea, such as "not repeating my mistakes."

The process of typing up the transcripts, and then checking them, while extremely time consuming (it took about four months in all), was productive in that each hearing of the voices or reading of the texts transported me back to the place and time of the interview. I smelt the coffee again, tasted the cookies, and saw again the postures, the hand movements, the small moments of interplay between those present that enriched the data and gave me clues about particular emphases and the importance of what was being said. Again there were the serendipitous moments, what is called in the women's movement the "ah-ha's." These are leaps of insight, intuitive understandings, which occasionally needed to be double checked with specific speakers, and could lead to a phone call to explore the topic. On every occasion interviewees were delighted to tell me more. This was the point at which I began to think that interviewing could be addictive, and wondered how easy it was going to be to make the break away from my new circle of friends. Research of this kind is clearly not something which has a finite beginning and ending. Rather, it has pauses for reflection at which point we often have to discontinue the work for pragmatic reasons. But in my research, for example, the process of thinking about gender and education among schools, parents and students is continuing and no doubt also changing.

Themes often emerged in the moving of topics of conversation from the margins of transcripts to the 6 x 4 inch cards, from where they were re-recorded on smaller cards, again colour coded, and attached with non-permanent glue to a large sheet of newsprint hanging on a wall. Emerging themes could then be arranged and rearranged in patterns, to visually suggest conceptual relationships for further exploration. As well, plastic sheets, which cling to walls due to static electricity, were used for what I called "graffiti"--random thoughts and ideas, a kind of intellectual journal, which were again organized under recurring concepts such as "popularity" and "distraction." Using chart markers to write on these sheets made it easy to erase and reenter material as my thinking developed.

The final step of this analysis was to work with the wall chart and the graffiti to develop a description and explanation of the findings which addressed my research questions as simply and efficiently as possible. This has taken longer than any other part of the process. I would see one pattern, write it up, and then realize that it was not satisfactory in some area, was partial, or not faithful to the findings. Throughout this process I also returned to the literature, to compare my data with what was argued there about gender, and about the education of girls. This was done to compare constructions of gender, and specifically of femininity, and of the future lives of the young women, with arguments in the literature.

Personal Reflections

During this process I often, as in the interviews, confronted my own preconceptions and ideas about gender. As a graduate of single-sex schools in England (elementary and secondary public schools), I carried a very positive schooling experience and love of education with me. As a long-standing feminist, though not one allied to any particular theoretical stance, I have been an advocate of ending patriarchy. As a mother I have watched both my children suffer from gendered assumptions in school, among their friends and in the workplace. Consequently I not only understood many of the concerns of my interviewees, but was, initially at least, inclined to support separate schools for girls. The heart of my personal engagement with the research is captured by my friendship with the Development Coordinator at the Christian Girls' School, who I call Mary.

Mary is a strong Christian, who has based her personal life and her career on her beliefs. I cannot follow her in this belief, although it is the one in which I was raised. Nor can I agree with her authoritarian attitudes to education, the emphasis on strict discipline expressed through relatively rigid enforcement of such rules as the wearing of the uniform, and restricted telephone calls home. An incident which I witnessed, of a young woman in severe pain continuing a cross-country walking race in order not to let her team down, brought these differences to a head. Why, I wanted to know, would the school enforce a rule which scratched the whole team if one of its members dropped out, and why would they want a student apparently to risk damage to her body by continuing when in such pain? Mary argued that the girls would not change unless they pushed themselves beyond their own limits. They had to meet and overcome obstacles if they were to succeed, and giving up could not be part of that picture. Further, the girl's doctor had agreed to her participation in the race, and her mother was one of the volunteers at the scene. (Her mother later told me how hard it had been to continue to treat this girl as one of the students, and not as her daughter.)

While I could understand the logic of this argument, even accept it to some extent at an intellectual level, I could not accept it emotionally or spiritually. Intellectually it sounded too much like the denial of pain that has been so much a part of the construction of masculinity. As well, my understanding is that we ignore the messages of the body at our peril, although I also acknowledge that the accomplishments of athletes and sports participants could not be achieved without being willing to endure pain. Emotionally, I was unwilling to accept that the endurance of pain was a necessary part of learning self-control and the courage to challenge oneself. Nor was I willing to apply this to myself. When the possibility of joining the hike was raised, I was relieved to find that my schedule did not allow that. While I could see and hear that the hike was an incredible experience, one which would offer me more insights into the school's climate and philosophy, and also while I would love an opportunity to backpack into the mountains, I was not willing to have that experience as organized by the school. Spiritually I thought that this rugged, masculinized interpretation of Christianity did not mesh with my understanding of the Christian message, due to its lack of acceptance of other values, other ways of thinking and being, and especially of the nurturing and caring side of the Christian message.

At the same time as I was in such disagreement with Mary's beliefs, I admired her own adherence to them, and enjoyed her personally. This was true of both the schools. I could enjoy and appreciate them at the same time as I disagreed with aspects of how they were organized or what they were doing. I realized that in research, as in life, one's beliefs and practices cannot be compartmentalized, but neither do they determine one's actions (or reactions). I could be a strong feminist and still appreciate anti-feminist women who were living out their own beliefs and values. Further, and more importantly, I could find common ground with them. We all were concerned to end discrimination against women, although we had very different routes to that end mapped out in our minds. I could remain committed to a different set of beliefs and practices, and still be able to hold the communication lines open, and to learn from women I might earlier have regarded as opponents. Thus this research has involved a personal as well as an intellectual journey for me. And it has led to developments in my thinking about gender, as well as to challenges to my personal philosophy and ways of acting in the world. My friendship with Mary, like my past experiences and my philosophy, contributed to the shaping of the research but did not determine its outcome.

CHAPTER 5

"A FUTURE WITHOUT LIMITS": THE EDUCATORS AND THEIR SCHOOLS

The research questions ask, in part, how the concerns of parents and students reflect or mesh with those of educators, and to what extent a girls' school has an advantage in presenting a more egalitarian model. In the two cases selected for study, a school had been created specifically for girls, and in response to concerns about the treatment of girls in coeducational schools, their self-esteem and their academic performance. In this section I compare the two schools in terms of why they were founded, their philosophy, their organizational structures and curriculum. This provides the educational context in which parents (with varying degrees of input from their daughters), come to a decision to send their daughters to one of the schools.

Founding of the Schools

The manner in which each school began is important for an understanding of how it developed, and of how it was perceived by parents and their daughters. The fact that one was begun by an inspired teacher and a Christian ecumenical community, while the other began with a parents' discussion group which included teachers but also other professionals, has had an impact on the organizational structures, in addition to their categorization as private (independent) and public (special program). Further, it has led to very different media publicity for the schools. The media found more to excite attention in the public program, and featured it quite extensively during the year prior to and following its opening. In fact the students became very tired of being interviewed, feeling as if they were continually under a spotlight, which to some extent they were. The private school was featured in the local newspaper once, but after that merited only an occasional and brief coverage of an event. Open houses at the public school have been well attended, and in the second year had to be repeated in consecutive weeks to accommodate all of the parents wanting to attend--about 500 in all. The private school, on the other hand, is very slowly increasing enrolment, and after its first five years had just over 20 students.

Christian Girls' School

The headmaster of this school had taught for 16 years at a Christian boys' school with a program which emphasized an independent spirit, willingness to push the limits of one's physical and mental ability, discipline and hard work, respect for the individual and responsibility to one's community. He began thinking about a similar program for girls, believing that they could benefit equally from it. The boys' school was run by an ecumenical Christian community, and the girls' school was planned on the same foundation.

When Christian Girls' School (CGS) opened in 1993, it had very little money, twelve students, and a large piece of rural property. It is located in a relatively isolated area, removed from any community beyond a few farms. The land and buildings had been previously used to run a program for troubled youths, as part of which they had built some log houses that served as residences. These were turned into a dormitory, staff residence and school house. A barn was turned into the Business and Fine Arts Centre, and other farm buildings were used as originally intended, for raising chickens, pigs and other livestock. A large garden was cultivated as well, with the produce used in the school's meals, and some of the livestock sold to raise funds for the school. Working on these projects was integrated into the student's entrepreneurial training.

Since that time the school has lurched from one financial crisis to another, but has always managed to stay afloat, and even improve and expand the number of buildings, plant flower beds and begin to develop the property generally. Parents and neighbours have volunteered a great many hours in this effort, not only working on construction projects, but also on social and sports events, sales of merchandise, auctions and graduation ceremonies. A board was set up consisting of staff, members of the local community, parents and interested supporters. The board sets general policy and discusses major decisions, but it is the Christian community living on site year round which really runs the school. That community consists of school staff--all full-time staff must be willing to be a part of it.

The community is the family to which students belong while in school. Since most of the students were boarders at the time that I visited, students and staff developed close relationships. They saw each other in all attires, at all times of the day, and staff had to act in the place of parents if students were sick, unhappy or had other problems. For the first two years, cooking was also done by the staff. They taught, organized, administered, cooked and nursed by turns as needed, and days off were few, highly cherished, but difficult to take since "home" was also "school." This could also lead to some tensions, and personality conflicts were not uncommon both among and between staff and students, but I did not see them ever get to a destructive level. Perhaps due to the school's communal and religious foundation, or due to the sheer volume of work to be done, tensions were not allowed to be disruptive for very long.

The many roles which staff had to play could contribute to stress and staff conflict, and also led to a certain level of chaos. I saw meetings at which decisions were made but there was no clear line of responsibilty for putting actions into effect. I saw staff who contradicted each other's instructions or directions, and students confused by a timetable that was constantly changed. Classrooms and private quarters were equally chaotic, with piles of books and clothing everywhere. It amazed me that the all-important hike which began each new school year was so well managed, as were the cross-country competitions. The school secretary appeared to be part of the key to all of this since much of this semiorganized chaos rolled through her office. My sense was that she spent quite a bit of her time and energy trying to keep track of it all.

The school is founded on religious beliefs, but also on specific educational principles, and on ideas about what traits and skills are desirable in young women. Education was seen as the establishment of an enquiring and critical mind, with the skills to do research and analyze findings. Discipline was a major part of this training. The students were kept constantly busy with school work and chores, so that they needed detailed self-organization to fulfill all requrements of them. This self-discipline was to be developed in a school which modelled both hard work and discipline individually, but a lack of order mixed with authoritarian structures organizationally. As I walked around the school I noticed piles of books, clothing, and other assorted items pushed into boxes, and scattered on shelves or on the floors of closets. No one space appeared to have a clear purpose beyond its general use as classroom, office or kitchen (and even the kitchen doubled as a classroom when needed). In the kitchen there might be an overabundance of one item and a deficiency of something else, each equally basic to the business of cooking. On a daily basis there would be crises about schedule changes or the timing of an event. A major part of the problem was too few staff taking on too wide a range of work in an environment in which they were constantly interrupted. They were also trying to have clear lines of authority and clear organizational structures, but setting these up within a community which made its decisons by consensus, and appeared not to record them or to record who was going to carry out any actions required. Consequently, staff sometimes had different memories of what had been decided.

Femininity was seen as good insofar as it was loving and nurturing, "womanly," but not good in that it "lacked spine." The school aimed to enable girls to stand up to the "rudeness" of boys, but more, to be independent, self-confident, well educated, high achieving individuals with a strong Christian faith, who remained feminine. The school also places a strong emphasis on the family, seeing it as the central unit which holds society together. They struggled with this, since at times it appeared to conflict with the career-focused and independent young women they were training. They saw that it did not have to conflict, but also that it could do so. They wanted the girls to enter romantic relationships as free and independent women capable of demanding (and giving) respect. Self-respect was central to this ideal. A male staff member commented that he could not accept a patriarchal society, in part because that would be destructive to him also. But at the same time, he saw no problem with a division of labour by sex, provided the mutual respect was there. Women should not expect a "golden handshake"; they are not victims to be compensated he said. They should have to struggle for it, so that they can be proud of their achievements. The school is not out to change women (or men) but to say they can do and be anything they want to. The family in this model is the first step toward changing the rest of the world. The staff believed that mothers should be the primary caregivers of their children. For this not to conflict with careers and with being independent would require at least negotiation with a partner, if not temporary dependence, and staff differed on how this might work. The school's construction of the desirable feminine is discussed in more detail below.

My first encounter with the school was when I drove out to meet with the headmaster and discuss the possibility of doing research in the school. I remember being welcomed and then left as some emergency came up, looking for, and finding, a rather basic washroom with no toilet paper, being "found" again and ushered into a cluttered office. At every subsequent visit I had the feeling that I was very welcome, my work of value to the school, but that I was, as in the model for the students, expected to take care of myself. This could be difficult without knowing the rules. I discovered what they were by breaking them, as for example, when I interviewed a student in a *staff* lounge, wondering why she seemed so ill at ease! Because I also had authority, she assumed I knew what I was doing when I invited her in there. How interviews could be done was never really resolved until I finally requested specific help because I could not get anyone to stay still long enough to talk with me. On my next visit I found myself scheduled to conduct interviews without a break for almost an entire day. This was typical of the school, and something that became as natural a part of visits there as the chaos (or the singing--everyone had to belong to the choir, conducted by the headmaster).

River City Junior High

River City Junior High (RCJH) grew out of a parents' discussion group at which perceived problems with public school education had led to the development of an innovative curriculum. The parents all had daughters approaching their junior high school years, and were worried about what they had read in popular books and in the newspapers regarding the loss of self-esteem and the lower achievement levels of girls in junior high. At the same time the province was introducing legislation that would allow the setting up of charter schools.The parents saw this as an opportunity to try out their ideas, while also providing a safer environment for their daughters. Charter schools could not be founded on sex alone, but the group's innovative curriculum gave them a basis on which to apply. However, the procedures for the implementation of the legislation were developed very slowly, and in the meantime the school board, perhaps anxious about funding formulas which followed the student, offered the parents the possibility of setting up their idea as a special program within its jurisdiction. This offer was accepted, albeit with some concerns about the extent to which the board would allow parents to continue to steer the program.

From the beginning, negotiations and the organizing of the school continually hit road blocks of one kind or another. Fitting an innovative and parent-driven program into an existing public school system, with its trained and experienced staffing, bureaucratic organization, and relatively rigid procedures, would be a daunting task in any circumstances. This was a time when the media had been voicing many criticisms of schools and teachers, however, and when parents, newly cast as consumers, were complaining about the "service" offered their children. Teachers and administrators might be expected to view these parents, whose actions incorporated implicit criticism of the schools, with some wariness, if not hostility.

Its beginnings set up future problems for the program. The program was headed by a Curriculum Coordinator, second in rank to the principal of the elementary school in which it was located. The Curriculum Coordinator therefore answered to two supervisors--the principal, whose primary focus was the elementary school, and the parents, who were fighting to have their program, unchanged, put in to practice. Further, location in the elementary school proved to be a mixed blessing. Its students resented the influx of more senior, and uniform-wearing girls, taunting them with being "snobs" and "lezzies." And its resources were geared to elementary school students. The resource centre was exceptionally inadequate, and all computers were initially housed there, rather than in the classrooms. As well, the principal was clearly conflicted between fighting for the best interests of his students, and supporting the efforts of the new program to get what it needed. One central issue reflecting this conflict became a question of where new computers should be located--in the library and used by all students, or in the classrooms and used by junior high program students only.

RCJH is described as "an alternative program that is being developed to provide girls with different choices and opportunities for learning" (RCJH Program handout for prospective parents). One of the founding group of parents commented:

> I guess there was [a motivation that included] safety for education, different learning styles, women's issues, the . . . sexual harrassment wasn't a major reason but it was one, and self-esteem and confidence in girls. (Stan)

The parents believed that the needs of their daughters could best be met in a single-gender environment. I think then, that rather than being founded with a particular vision of what girls could and should be, as CGS was done, this beginning led to the development of a program founded on criticisms of the existing public school system, and concern for adolescent girls. The program then struggled to define what was needed psychologically and intellectually for the girls, and academically for the school, and to make improvements. It was designed to address deficiencies rather than being founded on a vision, although some of the founding parents used the term "vision" to describe the program. The brochure also states:

> Parents have the right and responsibility to be involved in the educational experiences of their children. To enhance the students' school experience, it is important that we maintain a climate of trust, have mutual respect, cooperation and support between home and school.

Unfortunately, the policy of enlarging the founding parents' group into a society aimed at supporting the program ran into trouble early on as parents of other students began to take their role as partners in the enterprise seriously. It was clear that there were many different reasons why they had come, and the only unifying link often appeared to be their agreement that parents should be involved. The school became the site of continuing conflicts between the visions of several groups of parents, the teachers and the administration.

The founding parents continued to see themselves as initiators, and as responsible for the program's success after its incorporation into the public school system. They set up the River City Junior High Parents' Society to support the running of the school and to have a voice in planning and policies. There was a concern that the school staff did not understand their vision. A founding parent commented "it's an alternate program put forward by a group of parents . . . and they [administration] are trying to squeeze it into the usual [public school] program" (Stan).

As a consequence of this group's concern and desire to have a strong voice in the running of the school, and also due to the failure of the school's administration to find a way of putting them in contact with new parents without violating confidentiality of school records, some of the parents who had not been part of the founding group felt that they were being excluded from the society's actions and decisions. Added to this perception was a class-based split in which some saw the more educated and wealthier parents as dominating the society's activities. One commented that it seemed some parents were "not allowed to be involved," and also that those who did attend meetings "had confidence and vocabulary" (Pam). Another parent commented that all of the members of one committee "were wealthy and appeared not to understand the issues" (Brian). An example of this occurred during a fundraising campaign, when I received a phone call inviting me to a $40 a plate luncheon. When I hesitated, trying to find the right words to refuse without naming this as beyond my means, the speaker rushed in to say that I could book a table for $350 and recruit my friends to come also. Lower income parents felt that they were viewed as selfish for not being willing to spend money on their daughter's education. The conflict between the founding parents and the "newcomers" fell along two main lines--that the founding parents wanted to retain control of the school, and that there was elitism or snobbery involved.

There appeared to be several groups of parents within the society who were in conflict over issues such as fundraisings, the uniform, and the feminist element, but who disagreed both among themselves and with other groups. Sometimes it was one committee against others, sometimes it was clearly a personality conflict, and sometimes one parent did seem to want to be in control too much. The issues stayed much the same over time, never completely resolved. Some, for example, wanted the school to be no different than a public school, other than being for girls only, and having a uniform. While all parents supported the uniform, and generally for the same reasons--lack of distraction by fashions, lack of discrimination against students who did not wear designer jeans, simplicity when getting up in the morning--they did not agree on what the uniform should be or on how strictly it should be enforced.

Some parents supported the innovative curriculum, but translated it in different ways. Others were against it as taking away from the core curriculum. The women's studies component, intended to raise the girls' awareness of women's issues and of women's contributions to all academic disciplines, was another contentious issue. Some saw it as feminist, or too feminist, while others thought it was very necessary and did not care if it was feminist, or supported it as such. Some had not even noticed the women's studies component, were surprised when I asked about it, but then said they thought it would be all right if it did not "interfere with" the curriculum. A father said, "I don't think they're giving her [daughter] the foundation she needs to support herself to Grade 12" (John). The mother added:

> [The RCJH program] has not been a wasted experience, but the academics are not where they should be--a lot of outings will have increased her knowledge base in some things, but not related to academics and I don't know how valuable it is. (Sheila)

Another parent commented that her daughter was doing far less homework than she had in Grade 6, and this worried her (Tania). A number of other parents also measured the school's academic standards in terms of quantity of homework, and found it lacking.

Few parents appeared to know that the school had a feminist element incorporated in its foundation, but many said they would not want their daughter to be a feminist, and one father stated:

> At this time of her life she's been allowed to focus on the female aspect, which *to a point is good*. But it definitely for as much as what I could take of it *and I had definitely had enough* and H [daughter] voiced her opinion at times with [the question] "if everyone is equal why do we hear so much about women?" But there's an emphasis on female and it's a little bit choking. . . . When we walked into that we knew it was there but I didn't know how strong it would be and I knew that possibly I could say it was too much. [Italics added]

The mother argued that emphasizing women's issues led to paranoia, and there's "other people in more dire straits than you are" (John and Sheila). This couple removed their daughter at the end of the year.

These accusations came to a head at the end of the first year when a special meeting of the society was called on the evening of June 12, 1996. The agenda officially had to do with holding elections for the society, but the heart of the argument appeared to be over the resignation of the Curriculum Coordinator. From my notes at meetings, and conversations with the Coordinator and with parents, I inferred that the Curriculum Coordinator had been placed in the unenviable position of being seen as too feminist by some parents and not feminist enough by others. She was also accused both of not carrying out the innovative part of the curriculum as it was originally designed, and of taking it too far so that it undermined academic work. One group of parents were fighting to get her back, and others wanted the matter left as it was.

During the often angry discussions, comments were made to the effect that communications had been poor and many parents felt left out. The executive stated they had never been given a complete list of parents, and a parent complained that she had volunteered to help on several occasions but had never been approached (notes, River City Junior High General Meeting, June 12, 1996). As one participant said, it was "parents in conflict--too many fingers in the pie" (Tania). This meeting was "devastating, especially--seemed to bring no closure" (Susan). It went on for several hours, only ending when the society executive all announced their resignations and walked out. The Curriculum Coordinator issue was left unresolved, and in the vacuum, the resignation was left in place.

The new year (1996-97), under a new Curriculum Coordinator, later promoted to Assistant Principal, appeared to present a school that had moved closer to mainstream public school programs. Parents felt that many of the issues had been resolved, and that parents were getting along better, and were thankful for that. "Last year tempers were flaring all the time. This year they are trying not to do that and to hold the school together" (Pam).

Judged by staff descriptions of the innovative parts of the program, they have become significantly muted and retranslated into more mainstream terms. Risk-taking, individual projects and initiatives, as well as women's issues, were less in evidence in the second year and the intiating group of parents seemed to have a lower profile. A father said that he had been watching:

> kids at uniform pick-up this year--there's a change in attitude from last year--slight, might be wrong, but didn't feel the same and I don't like it--there was a lack of seriousness, like it was a big joke to wear a uniform or to be at school. Wondering what kind of year it's going to be with a larger number of girls. Feels like a public school attitude. (Ed)

Another said "there were heavy expectations of the program last year, and now with all the changes they are right back to square one" (Susan).

This is a school, then, in which parental involvement was crucial to the school's development, but in which the visions of the parents were not in synch, either with each other, or with the school staff and administration. At the same time, the views of parents and teachers about how girls behave in school and their future needs overlap considerably. It is the means by which an all-girls' school can accomplish those goals on which individuals differed. While some thought that the segregation was sufficient by itself, others thought that the curriculum needed to be changed also. Within the administration, the focus appeared to be on tailoring the innovative aspects of the curriculum to fit existing school board policies and procedures, rather than being willing to change or reinterpret those policies and procedures so that the innovative aspects of the curriculum could be tested. In particular, the principal seemed resistant to the program, and more focused on the primary school under his jurisdiction.

Organizational Similarities

Both schools were focused on resolving perceived problems not only in the educational performance of girls, but also in their personal growth and development. They wanted to remove them from the distractions of boys, both the desire to please boys, and the harassment and bullying to which many of the students had been subjected. They also wanted to proof them against further encounters with male dominance, so that they could do well in school and go on to satisfying careers. To encourage the girls to view themselves as potentially strong and successful women, both schools incorporated a women's studies component in their curriculum. This ranged from the use of novels written by or about women in the language arts courses, to studying women scientists, and to having guest speakers, such as women politicians, who were successful in their own field.

Both schools also had a school uniform, although at the public school the uniform included a greater amount of choice in what was worn, which proved to be one of the areas of conflict among parents. Uniforms as cultural symbols were discussed in chapter 3. Here I wish to draw attention to the use of them and the messages conveyed by them, in the two schools. Both schools used a kilt, white shirt, and sweater, with plain black shoes. The private school also had a navy jacket. Both schools also allowed the wearing of pants within the school, and had uniform items for physical activities. Since the private school did not have a gymnasium, indoor sportswear was not an issue.

At the private school the uniform was strongly regulated, and included a ban on makeup except on certain occasions, and limitations on jewellery which seemed to be constantly renegotiated, but which never went so far as to allow such items as nose rings. At the public school the uniform was much less strictly enforced, and in fact there were conflicts over who should do the enforcing. Most of the staff appeared to be very reluctant to spend class time on regulation, or to take strong measures of enforcement. Further, they were in a difficult position. In a residential school a student can be sent back to the dormitory to change. But in a day school it is more difficult to send a student home, especially if she lives some distance away and neither of her parents are at home. This would also apply to the day students at the residential school, but again, because it is private, it is able to utilize sanctions not available to the public school, such as "not being invited back."

The uniforms fit into the analysis of uniform use given by Joseph (1986) and Craik (1994) and discussed in chapter 3. They reflect the dress expected of a professional or businesswoman. In fact, parents at the public school sometimes said that the uniform was intended to symbolise that the wearer was going to work. The uniforms also were feminized versions of boys' school uniforms, and concealed the shape of the body wearing them. They were a reaction to the oversexualized fashions advertized in teen magazines, and worn by the girls in their previous schools, but they were also modelled on what the girls were expected to wear in their future lives. As well they were seen as simplifying getting up in the morning, and as creating a more egalitarian atmosphere. However, at the public school this was more rhetorical than factual, since the allowable variations gave students the chance to show off name brand clothing. For example one student told me that "the snobs" or popular girls in the school were scornful of her clothes because she went to a second-hand store to buy some of them.

Organizational Differences

Both in literature by and about the schools, and in the views of parents and students, there were similar themes that often differed in how they were explained and emphasized. This seemed to me to tie in with a fundamental difference between the two schools. At CGS, there was a very clearly defined philosophy on both education and on gender, and a sense of mission and purpose about the school. However, at the everyday level the school lacked a coherent structure, for example, organizational decisions were constantly changed or contradicted, and physical spaces looked cluttered and disorganized. Although the teaching and social practices were authoritarian, the "delivery" was inconsistent and changeable. What item of uniform was allowable for the activities of the day, for example, could vary between staff. Because the staff were all members of a religious community making decisions by consensus, there was very little hierarchy, with the only real status difference accruing to the headmaster, who was responsible for all final decisions, but who generally carried out the wishes of the community. At

RCJH, on the other hand, the basic organizational structures and hierarchy were already in place since the school was part of the local public school board administration. But the sense of mission and purpose was missing. As more parents became involved, the original vision of the founding group became diluted and almost lost. There was disagreement (discussed further below) among parents as to exactly what the school was trying to accomplish. So while CGS had a clear sense of purpose but lacked structure, RCJH lacked an agreed-upon purpose but had structure.

Both schools therefore focused on giving their students confidence, motivation, self-discipline and entrepreneurial skills, but their setting, organization and freedom to develop innovative programs differed a great deal. This in turn had an effect on how they operated and why they were selected by parents.

Parent Priorities

The CGS program includes an outdoor component specifically designed to make the girls more willing to push themselves rather than to give up when conditions are tough. Paradoxically, this push to have the girls become independent, even tough, is taught and modelled by staff who also demand respect for and obedience to their authority. This has particular anticipated outcomes and meanings for parents and students. A surprise finding was that the religious basis of the school held little significance for most parents, and was, in fact, more likely to have led to some hesitation on their part. A more important factor in the decision to send their daughter was a perceived need for a more disciplined environment as well as for small class size where the student would have to work. The outdoor program attracted many of the parents, who saw it as healthy and as giving their daughters more self-confidence and determination. Isolation from peers was a factor for some parents, but was less attached to boys than to a peer group culture which included partying, skipping school, and other activities which were having negative impacts on the daughter's school performance, and often on relationships at home. They wanted their daughters free from peer group pressures generally, and many parents had enrolled their daughter in the school because she was resisting or rebelling against her public school, and in some cases, against the parents as well. Parents at the public school, on the other hand, were more likely to talk specifically about the absence of boys.

At RCJH several of the parents who chose the program after its establishment said that they had rejected the choice of a private school because they believed the public school system should be supported. At the same time they had criticisms of the public system which led them to choose this alternative program. Most of that criticism also focused on a perceived lack of discipline in public schools, which were portrayed as not enforcing both codes of conduct and completion of school work, especially homework. Teachers were also criticized for this lack of discipline, often linked to an environment which denigrated girls especially. Parents saw smaller school and class sizes as offering a better and more personal relationship between student and teacher. A girls' school removed the "distraction" (i.e., the boys). Parents at this school chose it primarily because it was for girls only, and secondly because they believed it would be smaller and more personal. They wanted the girls to be isolated from boys, who were seen as a distraction, but only so that they could get their school work done.

What follows is a more detailed description of the philosophy and goals of the two schools.

The Schools and Their Programs

Christian Girls' School

The school's philosophy is expressed in its mission statement:

> Christian Girls' School is a community in pursuit of excellence. We educate young women in mind, body and spirit. They will become self-reliant, self-confident and self-motivated. This will enable them to embrace a future without limits.

In the interviews, in the school newspaper *The Christian Girls' School Gazette*, in its brochure and in journalists' accounts, CGS advocates develop a long list of desirable attributes for young women, with an equally strong view on how these should be inculcated.

While the organizational structures seemed to be weak, the philosophy of education and of gender was very clear. The first experience encountered by a new student set the tone, and the pace, for the rest of her time at the school. This was the annual hike.

"The Hike"

The Hike (always bracketed by students and often by their parents also), is a backpacking trip in the Rocky Mountains. All students and staff are involved. Sleeping under tarps, learning to dig their own latrine holes, to set up and take down camp, and to slog all the way to the top of the mountain in (on occasion) rain, hail, sleet and snow, is a physical, mental and emotional roller coaster for most of the students. They talk about The Hike with both love and hate, and there are stories which have become part of the school's mythology, of students who sat down and refused to continue, or who, on finally reaching the summit for which they were headed, and seeing the view, told the headmaster they hated him because he had been right that the climb was worthwhile.

Authority and Respect

Relationships with the students are not overtly authoritarian, but the rules which have been agreed upon by staff are strict when enforced (as noted above, consistency is not always in evidence due to the chaotic nature of the school's daily organization). The school works as a community in which each member has to pull their weight, and I observed a great deal of mutual respect between students and between staff and students, particularly those students who had attended for more than one year. I was told by staff that praise is considered a much more effective motivator than criticism, and students receive much individual attention in their classrooms. The quickest student action to elicit a negative response is the statement "I can't"--students told me that they have sometimes had to do pushups as a consequence. Expectations of students are high, and they are pushed to meet those expectations with a clearly stated understanding, based on their completion of the hike in many instances, that they can and will meet those standards. As long as students accept the authority of school staff and conform to school rules, they are "invited back" the following year, a phrase which I think implicitly demands conformity as a mark of membership in the community. The extent to which that conformity is limiting to the development of independence cannot be assessed without followup studies of its graduates.

Equality, Hierarchy and Authority

At the same time, other statements made in school publications and staff interviews suggest a more open approach to the division of labour in the family, and the school's emphasis on independence contradicts the message of subordination both within the school's philosophy of obedience to authority, and when in an adult relationship. This is a lived contradiction within the school. While insisting on obedience to their authority, staff also work alongside the students in the school and with outdoor chores. In the years during which this research was carried out, however, all of the staff except the headmaster were female (it now has two male teachers). The role model was therefore that of women doing most of the work. To what extent this carries a message about the division of labour in the household cannot be gauged without a followup study of graduates. What remains clear, however, is that in the event of single parenthood, the young women are expected to take full responsibility for any children they have, while also remaining independent and self-supporting.

The Desirable Feminine

Commitment. The school describes itself as "a community in pursuit of excellence" (Mission Statement). They have, as a core value, a "work ethic or the ability to work to one's potential until the task is finished" (Statement of Core Values). This can mean working long hours into the night to be ready for a craft sale, or completing a 40 km snowshoe race in spite of chronic pain. I heard the word "commitment" often--in written statements and in staff interviews. Three commitments appear to be central--the first is a commitment to the students by the staff, the second an expectation that the students will commit to the school and its program, and the third a commitment to the pursuit of excellence, for self and school, which is seen as being based on hard work and completion of the task.

The students are expected to stretch themselves "academically, socially and physically" (*River City News* 27.3.95:B1). Girls are perceived as having too low an expectation of themselves prior to entering the school, and they are challenged and pushed to set far higher standards. The Hike again is a symbol of this capacity to exceed prior performance, to "feel totally exhausted" and then find "they're capable of doing a great deal more" (*River City News* 27.3.95:B2).

Building character. This is a phrase which recurs both within this school's community and in the brochures of other independent schools, is part of commitment, and is done through "adversity, challenge and adventure" (Outdoor Program Handbook). The Hike, cross-country walking, and snowshoeing races are used to encourage this commitment to pushing the limits, to be resilient, but also to working as a team member and learning the skills of leadership, which is described as a use of talents and as a commitment to service. "Building character" appears to be at the heart of the resocialization process through which a new model of the feminine is to emerge.

Independence. Students are expected to make a commitment to themselves. The ingredients of independence, such as self-reliance and self-motivation, have to be internalized, filtered through the core values of the school. A second paradox here is that the students must accept these core values to remain in the school, and to be considered "successful," but those values include an espousal of, and encouragement to, think independently. Young women who are to take control over their own lives need the skills and the character traits to do that, teachers argue (staff interviews), and these include critical thinking skills, self-confidence in making decisions, and an ambition to go as far as possible in whatever task is undertaken. Students are seen as having to make one of three main choices which are tied up with their being female (staff interview). They must choose career, family or both. Whichever is their choice they then have to commit to see that through.

Marriage and family. The school has a stated commitment to the family, which includes a stand against abortion, and a commitment to relationship which abhors divorce or separation. At the same time there is recognition that many students will come from broken homes and different family forms such as single parent or blended families. While the two-parent family is seen as preferable, other forms are not portrayed as "wrong," but rather as harder or more taxing on the members. Family is seen as the central institution in society, the basis for social change and the development of the individual. A 1995 brochure states that the school will "encourage girls to understand the primacy of the family and the importance of its permanence and stability." At the same time, they are taught to take responsibility for supporting themselves, and their children if necessary. The intent is to "proof" them against dependence and poverty both within marriage and outside of it.

Two articles in a single issue of *The Gazette* (1995 3:1) illustrate this paradoxical stance. The first describes the school's history curriculum, and the second is an excerpt from the Old Testament of the Bible. It comes across as a sermon on womanhood. The history curriculum has, as one of its goals, that students will understand "women's significance in the historical story." Included are sections on women in the middle ages, the struggle for democracy, and women's suffrage. The students are reminded that class and race play a role as well as gender, and that they:

> Can be proud of their own stories and even a little "sad" that men were worse educated and kept going to war and getting killed! They understand that the "wife" of history had an importance, a vigour, and a dignity that is being denied her today. At the same time they learn to be outraged at the struggle that was necessary for them to gain legislative and judicial equality.

The "sermon" is an excerpt from Proverbs 31:10-31. It is a passage in which the "Wife of Noble Character" is described. This is a woman of "high estate"--one who can purchase land, establish a vineyard and carry out profitable trading. She works from before dawn to nightfall, has "strong arms," provides for her family and her serving girls, keeps everyone clothed and with warm bedding, and still finds time to serve the poor. In consequence, "Her husband is respected at the city gate."

In a later issue of *The Gazette* (June 1995 Vol.2:4 p.8) is a reproduced article from *The Canadian Home, Farm and Business Cyclopedia* of 1883 which states:

> If the commercial distress which visited this country between the years of 1873 and 1879 had brought us no other benefit, amidst the vast deal of suffering and ruin which occurred to a people who had been living too fast, it did this immense good: it taught women that they could work and earn money. It has been no uncommon thing for the wife and the sister to support the family during these dreadful years, now happily past.

The article goes on to say that while men were "broken and discouraged," women proved more versatile, turning their talents into profit. "One delicate woman during these dreadful years has supported seven men--seven discouraged, ruined, idle men, and she has done it very well, too."

I think, however, that here also there are tensions in these images of women, as equal partners in a family enterprise who may also have careers of their own, and as the "wife and mother" who holds the family together through her hard work and caring, and who defers to her husband. It raises questions about the reality of supporting oneself and family from a business while also being a full-time mother, as the school expects her to be able to do. There also appears to me to be some conflict over the nature of the equality between husband and wife in these excerpts. Is this an equality of respect or of status? A 1996 issue of *The Gazette* reflects this ambiguity. An editorial on families and education argues that the school can express its values on family through encouraging parents to be involved in the school, through offering a day school program, and by modelling:

> Living as a community is very similar to living as a family. . . . Living with two or three people in one room is a new experience and one which teaches [students] about the value of sharing and compromise . . . we are growing into . . . a community. As our staff expands to include both couples with children and single people, the girls will have the opportunity to see more traditional families in operation. This will provide them with the model for another choice in their lives--and it is a choice which will enable them to embrace a future without limits.

Not only is this statement somewhat ambiguous, but the school is in the financial dilemma that many families face. They cannot support a staff member's partner--partners who live within the community need to work for the community, or to support themselves outside. Students also see families, their own or those of others, who are working two and three jobs to pay the school fees, because they value its educational program. Thus the school's modelling of a family is one which responds to the exigencies of the moment, and does so to keep a commitment, and contrarary to a preferred ideal.

At the same time, other statements made in school publications and staff interviews suggest a more open approach to the division of labour in the family, and the school's emphasis on independence contradicts the message of subordination both within the school's philosophy of obedience to authority, and when in an adult relationship. This is a lived contradiction within the school.

The focus of this thesis is the constructions that individuals and groups, such as the community which runs CGS have for gender. Pulling together the comments about independence, commitment and family, and adding comments made about the characteristics of young men, gives an insight into how this group perceives gender, and specifically, the desirable characteristics of girls. There are contradictions here, as in the earlier themes.

Perspectives on Gender

Boys, they say, are "naturally aggressive." Boys are mean and disrespectful to girls, making school an unsafe environment for them, contributing to a loss of confidence in the early years of adolescence. Boys and girls *are* different, school staff argue, but they are equal. They need separate curricula and school programs, and different disciplinary approaches, but at the same time both need structure and challenge. A single sex-school allows girls to have their own space and to achieve on their own terms, rather than those of boys. Young men need to be taught manners, to learn to respect others, while girls need to be given "spine"--they have to learn to stand up for themselves--to respect themselves as well as others (staff interviews).

Girls set low standards for themselves, have little self-esteem or motivation, and accept the disrespect of boys. "What outraged me was not that men did it [disrespect], but that women put up with it. People will do what you allow them to do" (staff interview). There were many statements like this one, which either implicitly or explicitly suggested that what boys do is natural and in need of modification (such as learning to be respectful). Very few participants and no school staff suggested that boys' attitudes and behaviour needed the kind of fundamental change that was being promoted for girls.

Girls are to "pursue excellence" in whatever they do, be strong leaders, be independent and self-reliant, disciplined, responsible, confident, motivated, respectful of others. They are to be courageous and ambitious, risk-taking and yet still making sound decisions in pursuit of their goals. They are to achieve financial independence by making creative solutions to their needs, whether that is to pay for university or to support a child. They are to be competitive and to push themselves to their limits, both in testing their skills and abilities and in working hard until the task is completed.

CGS graduates will have learned physical and mental endurance, will be self-disciplined, will have good thinking skills and be able to make sound decisions. I understood "sound" to mean rationality over passion--emotion is to be kept out of this arena. The young women will, however, have a commitment to social justice, and while independent, will not be individualistic. Their focus will be on the communities to which they belong. They are to be good team players and communicators, who respect the abilities of others. Leadership is seen as service, based on respect, understanding and compassion. They are to be generous to anyone who is in need of any kind, to offer community service and to support coworkers and friends as needed. They are to go to the highest level of education they can, and never to stop learning. They are to work with men as equals, seeing them as people first, men second. These young women will, however, respect authority, and although they will be willing to question its manner and consequences, they will do so respectfully (staff interviews). CGS graduates will place a strong value on the family, and regard their roles as parents, and in their work, as transformative, "turning society toward a more just, compassionate, and hopeful place for people" (Parent/Student Handbook 1994-5). They will leave with the ability to make significant choices in their lives and to be successful at whatever they do, including the decision to enter into a committed relationship. They are taught that there is nothing wrong with dividing up the work of the family, whether that is in the "traditional" sense of the woman at home, or in other ways. But there must be mutual respect and equality in the arrangements that are made. The wife of noble character more than fulfills all expectations of her, but also expects that her husband do the same.

The school therefore sets out to change the characteristics of girls so that they have more self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance, motivation and control, and can "stand up for themselves," while at the same time being caring and compassionate, being leaders but exercising that leadership as a service role. The school aims to give the students values that are separate from those of boys, and a curriculum that "does not ignore differences, compounding inequality" (staff interview). The contradiction lies in teaching girls to be like boys so that they can fight back--but also affirming their difference as girls, which has been the basis for disrespect. In other words, the denigrated feminine remains denigrated insofar as girls are taught male qualities as a means to "building character," and the validated masculine remains validated, insofar as changes expected of men are to accept and respect women, but not to incorporate the so-called "feminine" qualities.

Discussion

There are a number of contradictions in the school's program. First, the school offers training in self-discipline, independence, critical thinking and the pursuit of goals, through authoritarian relationships and a chaotic organizational structure. Although that authoritarianism is modified in practice, it is present in many school rules, including the use of students' last names, and the wearing of the uniform. It is also present in the concept of being "invited back" which denotes a students' success in conforming to the life of the school.

Secondly, there is a conflict between career oriented, ambitious and independent young women, and the school's promotion of the family, and of the woman's role as primarily responsible for children. This school is not, like its Victorian ancestors, arguing that better-educated girls make good wives and mothers, though that might well be part of its beliefs. Rather, it is training its students to be both successful in paid work and as mothers, should they choose to do so. It is not aiming at changing the family structure drastically, and the Biblical passage, together with the assumption that women are the best caregivers, tend still to portray the mother as the stronger partner. Although some staff thought that a father should take equal responsibility within the family, this was viewed as subject to pragmatic considerations such as the ability to earn a higher income.

A final contradiction was the use of masculine characteristics to improve on a "deficient feminine," while expecting that the students would remain feminine. The masculine is validated over the feminine as a way to handle disrespect, but also as the way to approach all life choices and challenges, leaving the feminine as a denigrated form. At the same time, the young women would manage by themselves (male style) rather than seeking help in dealing with any kind of disrespect. My perception of this is that it would leave them very vulnerable.

It is not gender itself which has been problematized, but the feminine. A dichotomous view of male and female allows only the masculine as an alternative. Masculine qualities are validated at every turn--having "spine," risk-taking, carrying on despite all difficulties. By holding on to the so-called feminine qualities of nurturance and responsibility for children at the same time, the students are placed in a double bind. They are told to be independent and self-sufficient, but they are also left holding more responsibilities than the men to whom they are said to be equal, and those responsibilities mark them for at least temporary dependence and for vulnerability to poverty, while their independence marks them for vulnerability to denigration and harassment.[1]

River City Junior High School Program

The program designed by the original parents'group was to have a curriculum which would encourage risk-taking, efficient study methods and time management, independence and self-confidence in girls. Particular emphasis was placed on the value of technology, especially facility in using computers, and on entrepreneurial skills. The curriculum was also to include a women's studies component in all subjects, aimed at raising student awareness of the roles that women have played in society, past and present, and of the limitless nature of future opportunities which they should be prepared to access.

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[1] Martin (1984) found that sexual harassment was more likely to occur when the victim was better educated, young, and/or single, divorced or widowed. The education effect was thought to be present due to the greater likelihood that the woman was in a nontraditional job, and that she would report her harasser. In an aricle about the appointment of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, and the accusations by Anita Hill of sexual harassment by Thomas, Breggin (1995) writes of Hill that "she only wants to go on as best she can, to be as self-reliant and as self-possessed as she was taught to be, and to avoid flaunting her grievances. Then, years later, the victim tries to come to grips with her experience." (p. 190)

A particular feature of the program was that the core curriculum was to be enhanced by a day on which students initiated projects that explored connections between abstract knowledge learned in school and the "real" world outside its doors. In the process of designing and carrying out their own projects, the students would learn to be independent and self-motivated researchers, would access different types of resources, and would take personal risks such as interviewing prominent citizens, speaking in public, or simply finding their way around the city on their own. The first brochure about the program states:

> Our mission is to create a supportive, caring, learning environment that provides all students with opportunities to develop life-long academic, leadership and active living skills. Parents will have many opportunities for input and are expected to be highly involved with the program and the school. You are invited to join with us to be part of a school that is committed to student achievement, self-esteem, enjoyment of learning and preparing students for a society undergoing extensive change.

The use of the word "extensive" is interesting since it suggests that the social changes occuring are seen as greater or broader than at other times. Parents focused on the insecurity of jobs, and of marriage, in interviews with me. The schools aimed at inculcating skills and characteristics needed to survive in what they also saw as an uncertain future. The phrase suggests they saw themselves as the "gender missionaries" that they were trying to make of the girls. By changing feminine characteristics they saw themselves as making the future of the girls more secure (gender proofing), but also as addressing the harassment and abuse of women which have been subjects of public discussion such as occured in the Hill/Thomas case cited above. This would be accomplished through the building of character, making the girls able to stand up for themselves "like men."

Gender

The views of the RCJH program on gender seemed to match those of CGS, but without the element of pushing oneself to the limits, especially physically. Any challenges to RCJH students were framed within the academic curriculum. In part, the school is hampered by the rules and regulations of the public school system. For example, the day which was to be set aside for the students to do their own research has had to be changed by the requirement that school staff be responsible for the safety of their students at all times during the school day--physically as well as emotionally and mentally. At CGS, staff take all of the risks (e.g., the hike) that are expected of the students, and work the same long hours. RCJH is not in a position to require this of its staff.

Interviews with parents, summarized in chapter 6, demonstrate the extent to which their vision of what a woman should be overlapped with that of CGS. However, the ability of RCJH to incorporate and reproduce that same vision seemed to me to be severely limited by the structure and policies of the school system, and by the training and experience of a school staff used to public school methods and curriculum, as well as the many parental interpretations of what it meant in practice. This is a school which is founded on the assumption that girls should perform in school as well as boys, regardless of the subject, that they can, and have a right to do so, and that segregation by sex will free them from the distractions and discrimination which held them back in coed schools. But it was a school run very similarly to the coed schools from which the students had come.

A further complication of the decision to house the program in an elementary school was that the elementary was coeducational. Girls could graduate into the junior high program, boys could not. The question of "what about the boys?" was never addressed, nor was the hostility to the program from elementary students used to a peer culture which priorized boys, and which labelled a girl alone as a "lezzie" and a girl in uniform as a "snob." Possibly also, the Grade 6 students, who perhaps had been looking forward to the time when they would be at the top of the school's hierarchy, did not welcome the addition of higher grades to the school. During the first two years, I heard stories about hostility between the students, including much name calling, and was told that at a joint school picnic, the parents did not mix.

Discussion

The lack of detail on this school's philosophy and organization is an outcome of its failure to formulate a sufficiently strong vision that pulled in new parents, as well as the staff and administration. The founding parents had a vision, but it was never fully translated into practice. Their inability to get new parents to agree on how the original concepts should be put into practice meant that they failed to be able to pressure the school system into putting up the facilities and equipment needed to get the program off the ground. They were never able to demonstrate its effectiveness. At the same time, that inability was in part a product of the school's location in a public school system not well placed to sponsor innovation at a time of budget cuts and retrenchment. Further the inherent conservatism of a bureaucratic organization worked against the innovativeness of the program to a certain degree. The example of school policy regarding the safety of students is an example, since it is an important policy, but given the limited funding which could not cover paid chaperones of some kind, created limitations on the learning opportunities of the students.

My observation here is that these difficulties place in some doubt the viability of a school run by parents. Parents necessarily have the best interests of their own child foremost, and if these conflict with the needs of other students, for example in ways that put parents in competition for staff time or funding, it could be difficult to resolve. Further, founding a school as single-sex might be insufficient.

These difficulties were exacerbated by the placing of the program in an elementary school, in which the priorities were based on the needs of younger children. With hindsight, it would have been far better if the program had been made more independent and given its own funding. However, nothing in the events that followed its founding leads me to believe that this would have prevented the development of warring factions. The school lacked the sense of mission based on gender that is present in the private school.

Comparison of the Two Schools

CGS is a small, private and Christian school, with a disciplined, and physically and mentally demanding, educational philosophy, founded by its headmaster and run by an ecumenical community living on the property. Students are given a program similar to one designed for a brother school, and aimed at "toughening" them while still retaining their "feminine" qualities. Asceticism is present in the expectation that students will, whenever possible, ignore illness or pain to do what needs to be done. As in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries "muscular Christianity" movement, the body is disciplined to do what the mind requires of it. The small size and residential component giving the possibility of forming close relationships with each student is arguably the school's greatest strength. CGS has a mission, a clear philosophical basis and goals for its students, but was perceived by me as lacking the degree of structure and organization needed to carry this through, especially as the school grows in size.

RCJH, on the other hand, is a larger, public school program, initiated by parents but run within an existing structure to which it must conform. The initial intent, which incorporated many similar ideas to those of CGS, seems to have become watered down, and the main advantage to the students now may only be the absence of boys and the expectation that they will perform better academically in that environment. Even the women's studies component seems to be not as clearly present as it was before, at least in the minds of students, who complained about its absence.

The paradoxes inherent in the two schools had an impact on the responses of parents, but also were reflected in their views and actions. Each school was shaped by the beliefs and actions of its founders, but also by the structures within which it was run. The next chapter outlines the main themes which emerged from the interviews with parents. Chapter 7 introduces the students.

CHAPTER 6

"SO THEY CAN STAND ON THEIR OWN": PARENTS' CONCERNS FOR THEIR DAUGHTERS

Interviews with parents were carried out in the spring of 1996, when the public school program (River City Junior High [RCJR]) was in its first year and the private school (Christian Girls' School [CGS]) in its third year of operation. This meant that reasons for the school's selection were still fresh in participants' minds, but had also begun to be compared to the actual experience of the school.

There were two main concerns which led parents to consider one of the two schools. The first had to do with safety. Parents were more protective of their daughters than of their sons, and wanted to make them safe, both in the present and in the future. The second had to do with success, not in terms of money or status but in terms of being happy, confident and in control of their lives. Reflections back on their own experiences, and worries about their daughters' school behaviours came together in a set of perceptions about women's lives and of goals for their daughters. Parents wanted to do what I term "gender proofing" to make their daughters safe through "building character" which in turn would lead to good academic performance. For the parents of students at these two schools, protection and good academic performance meant small class size, self-discipline, segregation from boys or from peer groups, and a change in the students' behaviour and personality. Success meant academic and career achievements that satisfied the young women more than sent them to the top of their chosen field. It also did mean a heterosexual relationship some time in the distant (definitely underlined) future, "not until she's 27" as one parent said. I discuss these issues under the general headings of safety and success. This discussion is followed by an exploration of parents' views on gender, more specifically, what they have to say about femininity, masculinity, and feminism, and how this fits with the views of the schools.

Safety

Parents defined safety in a number of ways. It might refer to physical, emotional or mental safety. That is, it could mean freedom from any kind of attack, and freedom to be able to stretch oneself physically and intellectually, to take risks. Safety was connected to class size and school size, but was mainly described in terms of the absence of discrimination and distraction. As well, mothers described it in terms of becoming sexually active, or having children, before a career was established, while fathers were more likely to emphasize safety from the dominance and distraction of boys. Safety seen in these terms led to the belief that segregation, whether in terms of cloistering or not, would allow the girls time to gain the skills and characteristics they needed in order to be safe. Small class size was also a factor which bridges protective concerns and desires for daughters to perform well academically, and which allows them to "build character."

The choice of school was based on a desire to protect daughters in the present, as well as to proof them against what parents saw as a difficult adult world of work and relationships. Some parents remembered unsatisfactory, or even bad school experiences, and they often also said they did not want their daughters to repeat the mistakes they saw themselves as having made. They were generally aware of the possible impacts of global economics and of Canada's shift toward the service industries on the futures of their daughters. They knew about the risks of teen pregnancy, and marriages that end in divorce, and worried about their daughters' vulnerability to poverty.

School performance was always spoken of in the context of concerns to protect daughters from the lack of security that goes with a poor educational background. Parents from a more working-class background were concerned to have their daughters improve on their status, while middle class parents wanted to protect their daughters from a status loss. For the public school parents especially, that meant a school with no boys. Some parents who were also elementary teachers in coeducational, public schools, told me they had observed the Grade 5 and 6 girls gradually becoming quieter, less assertive, and starting to worry more about their looks. For private school parents, no boys was a bonus but the emphasis was "different peer group," added to small class size and strong discipline. It was the private school parents who most often had experienced the greatest problems with their daughters, and who saw the isolation of the school as a definite asset.

When I asked for a comparison between a son and a daughter, I found that while many parents were protective of their sons, they felt more strongly about the need for this care for their daughters. Daughters were seen as more vulnerable to physical, emotional and intellectual attacks or loss of self-esteem, and more likely to be distracted from school work by a concern for appearance and a desire to please the boys. One mother commented that she worried she had not been as protective of her son, and had made decisions about his schooling that were reactions to his behaviour rather than based on concerns for his safety. She wanted to be sure that her daughter *was* safe. Protectiveness is discussed below in terms of "not making my mistakes," segregation and cloistering, discrimination and harassment, distraction, and class size as a safety factor. I also note that underlying these factors, and also in discussions about the school uniform, and about the appropriate times at which young women should be making their own decisions about clothes, school, and other activities, protection is equated with control ("for her own good").

My Daughter Will Not Make My Mistakes

Protectiveness was often linked to the parents' perception of how they had handled their own school years. For fathers, this was most often framed in terms of school performance, but for mothers, who had often done well in school, it was framed in terms of not marrying too soon. A father, Brian, said:

> You just showed me something about myself that I find very interesting, and that is that I'm very proud of the fact that I have this daughter in an

> all-girls' school. This is that I feel strongly that because I was so busy trying to impress the opposite sex, I did myself damage.

His wife, Susan, asked:

> It was more important to be popular than to do well?

and he replied:

> It was more important to be popular--with girls and boys.

He felt that he had jeopardized his future messing around like that and this is why he sent his daughter to an all-girls' school.

I asked if "the connection was the distraction?" and he replied, "*exactly*!" He was disappointed in himself and didn't realize it until he had a daughter. "You thought your daughter would repeat your mistakes?" I asked. "Yes." He said that they had considered boarding schools but the cost was too much. He wanted his daughter to get the most from high school. "I squandered my time so badly I don't want my daughter to repeat my errors--her habits are conducive to her doing that" (Brian, RCJH). A judgement was being made here that the daughter's "habits" were leading her to "squander" her time in school, and that she needed to change her ways. It was in remarks such as this that I first became aware of the overlapping of protectiveness with control of their daughters by parents.

"I never developed good study habits" said one father, and as a consequence "I never lived up to my potential" (Stan, RCJH). Another said he was "in trouble in so many places" that he gave up even trying, ending with Grade 10 (Peter, CGS). Many parents said that their lack of education had held them back, and that with the changes in the economy, it was imperative their daughter do better. However, that "lack" of education ranged from Grade 10 to an undergraduate degree. There were no absolutes to the level of education thought desirable. Rather, it was often relative to that of the parent speaking (father or mother). The daughter was to do better than they had.

A father said that he didn't want his daughter to experience the poverty and the "meanness" of his own childhood, and had evidently made some considerable sacrifices to ensure she was raised in a better and safer neighbourhood (John, RCJH). A low-income parent said that she wanted her children to have a better life, both materially and in terms of their continuing educational experiences, than she had managed to do (Janine, RCJH). Many parents wanted their children to do better academically, as well as to have more income, than they had, but this parent also saw the enrichment and pleasure to be had from education for its own sake.

"How much of your own experience is influencing your thinking about your children now?" I asked a father. He replied:

> A lot. I see a lot of people in my job who cannot read, write or understand instructions adequately. I'm not sure if it's parents not ensuring children do homework, reading to them etc, or the school system. Kids need to know [how to study] at an early age. (Ed, RCJH)

For other parents, who had done better, but with a long struggle due to what they saw as early mistaken choices, it was a matter of not taking the hard route to success. One mother said:

> My daughter, by God, one way or the other, is going to start her life as an adult knowing she can do anything she wants to do. She doesn't *need* a man, and she will make a choice of what she wants to do and who she wants to take into her life . . . and it will be an informed choice--the kind I never made. (Sonja, CGS)

Many parents used the terms "rational" or "informed" in relation to the skill of "making good decisions" which is discussed further below.

Women tended to say they did not want their daughter to marry right out of school as they had done. A few mothers said that they had always had this idea at the back of their mind, that they would go back to school one day also. Another said, "I do hope they'll be doing something different from what I did." She grew up expecting " marriage, the white picket fence, etc" and took a job which would allow for children, only to have her marriage end in divorce. "At 18 I couldn't wait to get out. Now I'd go back at the first opportunity . . . it's never too late, never wasted" she said (Britta, RCJH).

Parents generally did not want their daughters to priorize relationships or marriage and family, but rather, to become established in an occupation or career first. The mother just quoted commented that she did not want her daughters to expect to divorce, but on the other hand she wanted them to be able to cope if it happened, to be self-sufficient (see below). She said that raising a family on an office worker's income had not been easy, and she wanted her daughters to be in a better position. And a CGS parent said "My daughter will know who she is, or she'll know it better than I did" (Lara, CGS). Protectiveness seemed to be very close to control over daughters. Knowing that the research suggests parents tend to control daughters more than sons, I asked some questions about who made the decision for an all-girls' school, who would decide on the future high school, and about the uniforms.

Control

Parents varied enormously in the extent to which they considered their daughters able to make decisions at the time. Brian, above, gave his daughter no choice. Some parents said they would not allow their daughters to select their high school either. Other parents had allowed their daughter to choose her school, or had given her the final say. A quote from an RCJH student is appropriate here. Tonia said:

> Like at the beginning, when she [mother] first found out about it, she said I was gonna go, I was gonna go. She signed me up at both schools--the public one and this one, and then she said "OK you don't have to go," and then two days before I went she goes; "you're going to that all-girls' school," and I was like [draws in a breath], I don't want to go, and I really didn't want to go, but I did. (Tonia, RCJH)

Parents could appear very determined, and then back off in the face of a daughter's pleading. One couple accepted their daughter's choice of RCJH, but said "it wouldn't have been our decision" (John & Sheila, RCJH). When I checked on these parents later, I found that they had withdrawn their daughter from the school.

A mother said that she thought students should not be on any of the RCJH committees discussing concerns that affected their schooling. They could be involved in social or extracurricular activities, but not the uniform committee, for example. They were too young to make those kinds of decisions, and this was not the right time to give them responsibility--they needed safety and parameters so they could make "safe" mistakes (Gillian, RCJH).

Making safe mistakes came up again in the context of adolescence. Girls are too young at this age to make the decisions they have to, and to live with the consequences, said parents who were concerned about the number of sexually active students in junior high schools. Segregated from boys at school, access to sexual activity became easier to control. One parent admitted that such is the level of fear for many parents that when her daughter told her that she had started to menstruate, but told her in terms of having become a woman, her first reaction was to think her daughter had had intercourse. Protection and control overlapped constantly. This was justified in terms of independence (see below). In fact independence was a major theme in parental desires for their daughters. The skills and characteristics needed to make good decisions were also part of confidence building and independence, which would lead to a safe, secure, and successful future in which their daughters could be self-sufficient if and when necessary.

When interviewing parents I noticed that it was generally the mother who volunteered to meet with me. Occasionally the father would be present also, and on one or two occasions dominated the conversation. But even in these couples, education was seen as in the realm of the mother's expertise and control. Very few couples regarded it as a decision made by both mother and father, and often the father would defer to the mother during interviews. When the family included a son, however, the responses were more mixed. Some fathers seemed to feel that they had more expertise in a son's education than in that of a daughter.

Uniforms

All of the parents at both schools supported the wearing of a uniform, usually by pointing out its simplicity when getting dressed, the amount of time saved when not having a choice of clothing, and the egalitarian nature of a uniformed school. A uniform makes it difficult to dress for the attention of boys, and is more difficult to make "sexy." As Marianne (RCJH) said, "Nobody's talking about clothing . . . it's not a fact . . . [I] don't want them distracted by clothes and makeup." Some parents argued, however, that the kilt and white blouse favoured by both schools was "feminine," while others emphasized it as a business style, or as work clothing. This was especially true of parents at the public school.

A uniform, however, also is a marker. The girls could be identified very easily outside of school. At the public school in fact, students would change out of their uniforms before leaving, to avoid being teased and called "lezzies" or "snobs" by other students. They did not want to stand out. Their parents, on the other hand, became involved in some unresolved arguments about the extent to which students should be made to wear the uniform, and of conformity to the required items. There was also extensive disagreement about how much choice to give the students. By the end of the first year, that choice had been limited quite severely. It seemed to me that the uniform symbolized the meeting place of some of the contradictions about both schools. It was expressive of control. A uniform allows for much less choice in appearance. It also is seen as elitist--only private schools have uniforms. At the same time it was claimed as freedom from slavery to fashion, and from the desire to look sexual, and as being egalitarian, since everyone looked the same. Some parents argued they were dressed for work, and "jeans are something you wear around the house, not go to work in" (Caroline, RCJH). My reaction to the uniforms was to think that they made the students look both more "classy" and more innocent, words which carry connotations, respectively, of class and of sexuality.

Pregnancy

Probing about parental views on adolescent sexuality, I asked for their reactions if their daughter became pregnant and wanted to keep the baby. "Oh good!" said Pam of the question, while Ed, her husband, said:

> You don't want to know [what I'd do]! I'd probably flip right out just because of her upbringing until now . . . we have discussed it so much, she knows how we feel. It would probably be the biggest disappointment for me because I know that she's got a head on her shoulders and that this should never have happened. I think that if she wanted to keep. . . . I think I'd probably encourage her to keep the child because . . .

This father implies that becoming pregnant would not be a rational act, and as such, would disappoint him because he believes his daughter "knows better," and knows that her parents would disapprove of her sexual activity.

> I don't think we've ever talked about that though. (Pam)
>
> I've got no faith in social services--I wouldn't want to see a kid put in[illegible] that system. (Ed)
>
> Would you be a stay at home grandpa? (Pam)
>
> Sure. [she's laughing] (Ed)
>
> So once it happened you'd be supportive? (Interviewer)
>
> It would take awhile. (Pam)
>
> Ye----p! [laughs ruefully]. (Ed)
>
> I think so. I'm pretty sure, once I'd calmed down, thought it through. . . . I'd be so sad for her--it changes her life--but it goes without saying we'd be there for her. I'd rather she didn't have an abortion. (Pam)

Pregnancy isn't a parent's worst nightmare, parents agreed, that would be illness or death, or having a child hurt by someone else, but it would be a real concern. However, their initial reaction *was* to say "that's a parent's worst nightmare," usually using those words. Then they would quickly qualify the statement. This suggested to me that the basis of the concern was sexuality.

Parents knew that many adolescents are sexually active in junior high school, and they did not want their daughters to be in that category. Both focusing on school work, and the risk of pregnancy which could undermine school work, were the main reasons for this. Some said they would, and some would not, advocate abortion, and they were about evenly divided on the issue of whether to turn to abortion. They were agreed that their main concern focused on the youth of the mother--that this meant less mothering skills and a greater chance of living in poverty. It was interesting, however, that none discussed the role of the father in responsibility for the child. Parents want their daughters to be able to support themselves and their children if necessary, and this apparently extends to the teenage mother as well.

Segregation and Cloistering

Some mothers wanted their daughters to go to an all-girls' school so that they could gain the positive experiences of being with other girls. They talked about their own time in an all-girls' school, or of working in an all-female environment, and of how meaningful and supportive that had been for themselves, and how they saw an all-girls' school as an opportunity for their daughters to have access to the same experience. One said of the school, "If I'd been Sara [daughter] I'd have wanted that" (Marianne). For most parents, however, the segregation had more to do with protection and safety.

Parents wanted daughters to be safe, in the belief that safety underpins good school performance. This safety was contrasted with the discrimination and harassment that had been either directly or indirectly experienced by the daughters in their previous schools, and sometimes also by mothers in their own schooling. At RCJH, a couple said: "We feel very strongly about everyone feeling safe, everyone feeling that they have rights that will be respected." The school as a safe place for the students was discussed in a number of contexts. It was free of harrassment from, as well as the attractions of boys, and it was also a safe place to experiment with one's abilities in academic work, as well as areas such as sports, drama, and art. Asked if safety was important, a mother said, "That would be number one for me" (Pam RCJH), "that she feels safe" agreed the father (Ed). Another father said that "it's safer because I believe boys are more daring to get into trouble than girls" (Brian RCJH).

Cloistering

A segregated school could also be seen as cloistering girls so that they can focus on their studies, gain confidence, be themselves. Parents stressed the development of self-respect and self-confidence. Stress levels are reduced through removal from actions such as name calling, and also through not having to work on their appearance and personality to please others, or to become involved in the risky distraction of sexual activity.

Sometimes the cloistering took on the tones of preservation of innocence--keeping daughters away from knowledge of the evils of the public world (sex, harassment, glass ceilings, abuse and divorce being some of these). By placing their daughters in a segregated environment, they could keep them safe from "growing up too soon," or as Benton (CGS) put it:

> Because personally I think kids get too interested in the opposite sex way too early anyway . . . the social aspect of it [might be a disadvantage], but really that's minor.

The "social aspect of it" is interpreted by Watson (1996) as a reference to being heterosexual.[1] Thus the girls are not to grow up too soon, but are eventually to be interested in the opposite, and not the same, sex.

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[1] "Normal" development is identified by Watson (1996) as code for "not being lesbian." Parents interviewed by her often expressed concerns that not being exposed to boys might affect their daughters' sexual development. The parents at RCJH and at CGS appear to have set such concerns aside, if they had them, in favour of other issues, either deemed more important than any fears about sexual orientation, or perhaps, through simple denial that their daughter could possibly be sexually interested in another woman. And at this time of their lives, they definitely did not want their daughters to be paying attention to boys.

A parent who was also a teacher told of watching students in the hallways of her school "crude talking . . . sort of a flirtation . . . but the girls were going along with making fun about your body or, or talking about [penis] size." She felt that there was a lack of self-respect in the girls' involvement. Arlene said:

> The escape route of, um, the uncontrollable behaviour of their daughters. The escape route of maybe if I put them in a boarding school, then they *have* to attend classes, and it becomes somebody else's problem . . . because the situation is so out of hand.

Parents whose daughters had been heavily involved in some form of unacceptable behaviour, variously labelled as "acting out," "rebellion," or "too much partying," such as skipping school, coming home drunk or high on drugs (or both), and staying out all night, sometimes turned to the residential school program at CGS as a last resort to get their daughters to "straighten out." Here, cloistering incorporated physical isolation from their peers.

Several parents commented that they saw their daughters playing like children again after entering the all-girls' school. Instead of worrying about clothing and appearance, they were playing "make believe" games, skipping, and having fun. "Innocence" meant not worrying about boys and sex, not getting into dating-type relationships, treating boys as friends. It was not just the distraction, Arlene said, it was the threat of what boys did. Stan (RCJH) said that girls compete for the attention of the boys, and that distracts them from their work. The girls were expected to want an opposite sex partner, but later, after their careers were launched. Some parents worried that their daughters might lose their social skills with boys, might not develop normally (which Watson [1996]) interprets as meaning heterosexual), but these parents also argued that their daughters saw enough of boys outside of school, in extra curricular activies, or when socializing with relatives, neighbours, and friends, and there was no cause for concern over the segregation.

At CGS parents saw the school as a safe place physically, emotionally, and mentally. The physical isolation of the school ensured that the students were out of reach of their previous lives. They were safe from their peers, from the lure of drugs, alcohol, sex and partying, but also safe in a smaller school, and free from the fear of rejection. One parent said, "[I] like the idea of our girls being there without all this boy stuff. Because let's face it, it's a mean world out there and we want to keep our daughters safe" (Arlene).

Segregation and a Residential School

Parents, especially mothers, who wanted to cloister their daughters often had some ambiguity and guilt mixed up in their concerns. If they enrolled their daughter (or son) in a boarding school, they expressed feelings of having abandoned them, or of not being a good parent for sending their child away. At the public school, parents sometimes wondered if they should have sent the daughter to a private school, because the education and social skills would be better. At the same time they didn't want their daughter so far from home, or away for such long periods. They did not like the idea of her growing up where they could not watch, but this concern was also connected to a fear that she would grow away from them. Parents were protective of their daughters and concerned about homesickness, but that protection also incorporated an element of control, of not wanting the daughter to develop in isolation from the home. This fear was affirmed by a student at CGS who commented that she felt like a stranger when she went home on weekends, especially as things would have happened while she was away that she had no part in (focus group CGS). Cloistering, then, had disadvantages which for some parents outweighed the advantages and led to either support of RCJH or to enrolment as a day student at CGS when possible.

Discrimination and Harassment

As stated earlier, parents reflected on their own experiences in school, as well as taking into account those of their daughters. While some had only read about discrimination and harassment in schools, several had experienced it themselves, or had discovered it was happening to their daughters, often through falling grades and withdrawal from social activities.

While much of the discrimination I was told about focused on appearance, some involved a girl's intellectual, sports or other achievements. A mother told me about her daughter being afraid of junior high because she had been told she was going to get beaten up by some other girls when she went. The mother suspected they were jealous because she had been featured in the media after winning an award (Pam, RCJH). Another parent was told her daughter could not transfer schools (prior to legislation allowing school choice) in order to further her athletic career, while a boy in the same school was given permission (Marianne, RCJH). Several had daughters who had been left out of sports activities which were seen as being primarily for the boys. Parents and students commented that boys particularly don't like girls who are good in sports, and one cited a male teacher who had left girls out of sports activities because he said the boys couldn't take the competition.

Some girls had been physically bullied, being kicked, slapped and punched for reasons which ranged from being "fat" to refusing to do a boy's homework for him. Girls whose physical development happened either much before or much later than their peers were subjected to taunts and physical abuse, while others were put down in class by other students--usually but not always boys--for their contributions to discussion or answers to questions. A father commented that the result was that girls are "afraid to be who they are" (Benton, CGS). One daughter was described as having become so withdrawn that it was months before she began to participate at her new school, and a mother talked about discovering that her daughter had been called "bitch" and taunted all through her Grade 6 year, and then the daughter dismissed it as "just the jerks" (Marianne, RCJH). I did occasionally hear a story of retaliation. For example, Tania (RCJH) told me about a boy who had verbally and physically harassed her daughter for four years, until she grew taller than him. Once she realized her advantage, "she turned around and decked him." A student at CGS told me a similar story.

According to a parent teacher, boys on the other hand, expected the girls to enjoy their harrassing--to "take a joke" otherwise it must be "that time of the month" or she was "a feminist bitch" who "doesn't like sex." The teacher thought that the boys thought of it as flirting, and had little concept of the hurtfulness of their actions (Betty, RCJH). Parents who were also teachers said that many teachers took no action over these behaviours, so that the girls had to learn to deal with it themselves. One told me of parents who would get hostile if complaints were made about their son's behaviour. There seems to be a general inclination to dismiss it as natural and as unchangeable. A father said a teacher responded to his complaint with "boys will be boys" (Peter, CGS).

Distraction

If discrimination and harassment made the parents angry, and wanting to segregate their daughters, distraction more often had them frustrated, and insisting on a uniform. A parent argued that the "male presence in school is a distraction" (Benton, CGS), with the girls competing for the boys' attention, both through appearance and by playing down their skills, acting dumb or cute. They don't want to get higher marks than the boys, because this upsets them. Most of the parents supported the wearing of a uniform in part because it did away with the distraction of worrying about the "right clothes," being in fashion, looking nice--or sexy--and spending hours on makeup. "I just wanted them to do the things they wanted to do, and do it well," said one (Rene, RCJH).

Some mothers who were also elementary school teachers said they had observed girls as quite vocal until Grade 5 or 6, at which time they became more silent, and let the boys take over leadership. One said of her own experience in junior high school math class that one boy "would turn around and look at you [if you said anything]. I was so scared that he would say something [denigrating] to me I never spoke" (Britta, RCJH). Boys distract by their presence and by their actions. They determine popularity, and the popular girl has to be able to take their teasing, giggle at their jokes, and be good looking--"girls are groupies around male cliques" said a teacher (Nadine, RCJH). Public schools appear to have strong cliques which demand conformity and can be very cruel to those they define as "outsiders."

In coeducational schools, say parents, boys are a big part of girls' lives. Not only do they dominate classroom and recess activities, but also the girls spend a great deal of energy and money on dress and makeup to please and impress them. They tend to change themselves to fit into a boys' group. Whatever the distraction--harrassment, being a groupie, or entertainment, the end result was a poorer school performance, and parents were adamant that their daughters do well in school, especially in science and math. One father claimed that "math is at the basis of everything" (Stan, RCJH). Success, I sometimes thought while conducting the interviews, seemed to be particularly vested in science and math. If the student's skills were good in these areas, the rest would be just fine, but if they were not doing well in science and math, then their chances of success were much lower. Careers in science or math were (probably accurately) seen as having more openings and greater security, however, they are also careers which traditionally have been associated with males. A woman who enters them is considered to have embarked on a "nontraditional" career. The importance of them is their greater opportunities for security and a good income, whereas traditionally female occupations such as childcare, have been generally less well paid or secure.

Class Size

When parents talked about school and class size, they said that they did not believe research studies claiming class size was not a factor in student behaviour and performance. Their own children were examples of students who had become lost in large schools and classes, they said, and intuitively they knew that a teacher with 30 students could not get to know them as well as a teacher with 20 or less. Without that personal relationship, parents said, students lost the incentive to participate in class--it became a war between students and teachers over behaviour and work.

In the RCJR program parents chose the public school primarily because it was an all-girls' school, and they believed their daughters would do better there without the presence of boys. But they also *hoped* that an all-girls' school would be smaller, with smaller classes. At CGS, on the other hand, parents chose the school because it offered smaller class size and better discipline. While all of them were pleased it was single sex, that was mostly a bonus rather than the central reason for their choice.

Size was often equated with safety. A parent said that she felt the small groups at RCJH supported the student as a person by allowing for closer relationships with teachers, and less anonymity. "Teachers know her and us," she said, "They know what she can do, where her weaknesses are. And they will work with the parents to improve performance" (Pam, RCJH). Her husband argued that the Edmonton Public School Board should downsize "these huge schools" because they created problems (Ed, RCJH). A small school like RCJH allowed for a semipersonal touch, a greater closeness with teachers getting better results. Teachers become human beings to the students, role models. Although parents often said that in the larger schools teachers lost control over the students, they focused on relationships rather than control when describing the benefits of the smaller classes. This is not necessarily a contradiction since control and good relationship go together. In a smaller classroom, the teacher has greater influence over her students. Sondra said that her daughter "liked the quiet . . . in a smaller, more secure environment." Tania and Marianne, both mothers at RCJH, argued that smaller size meant closer relationships, greater support and more trust.

Success

Parents selected a school based on their perceptions of what its program would do for their daughters' academic performance and personality/character traits. Most thought that the student had not been performing as well as she could academically, and often this was attributed to distractions and to a lack of self-confidence. Some students had been in trouble with their schools, for skipping, noncooperation, or use of drugs and alcohol. Others had stopped doing homework, or were generally performing at a much lower level than in primary school. Parents' concern was to see their daughter perform better so that she would be able to go on to some kind of further training and to a good job (defined as much in terms of security and satisfaction as income). As parents talked about the schools, protection could be seen as underlying concerns about performance, which was expected to improve when their daughters were safe, and at the same time, performance was to be the protection against the future, a sure route to success.

Success was not necessarily defined in terms of upward mobility or income, however. It was more likely to be seen in terms of self-confidence, life satisfaction, or "maxing out on their potential" (Ron, RCJH). Success had several ingredients, including confidence and building character, which included making good decisions, and developing independence and self-sufficiency.

Confidence

The increased confidence mentioned by some students when talking about their present school was spoken of by their parents even more often. Several used the terms "I can't" and "I can" to contrast a shift in their daughter's attitude since entering the all-girls' school, while two commented that now their daughter would say "I can do it but I don't understand this bit," rather than saying "I can't do this." (Sondra, CGS; Mary & Pam, RCJH). One mother said her daughter could now laugh at herself, several students said, "I'm succeeding here," and I heard stories of previously nonathletic students winning interschool events, or shy ones who stood up and performed in front of the class. Cecilia (CGS) said that "everyone has commented on what a mature, intelligent conversation she can carry on now."

This increased confidence, and with it, improved performance, was attributed to the physical, emotional and mental safety of the students in the schools. Because there were no boys, because the schools were small, and because the teachers wanted to teach in an all-girls' school, there was an encouraging, supportive environment in which "anything is possible" as one parent put it. Without taunts and harassment, without the competition of physically larger, more aggressive and louder boys, and in a school where "you know everyone" and where the teachers were your friends, students performed better and regained confidence in themselves, said the parents. Seeing these results was often cited as confirmation that their decision to enrol their daughter in the school was a good one.

At CGS the outdoor program was cited as a particular source of the increased confidence. One staff person commented that when the girls returned from The Hike, they would have their hair pushed back from their faces, their backs straight and they would look you in the eye. "[for many it's their] very first absolute accomplishment, and their very first real success. And it wasn't something that came easy . . . this took real effort" (Arlene, CGS). The hike symbolized what parents wanted for their daughters--to feel good about themselves, to have a sense of achievement, to push themselves just a little further than they thought they could go. "I don't want them to be treated any differently than boys," said one parent (Sondra, CGS). And Janine (RCJH) said that confidence would enable her daughter to "make the right moves" and to get out of the poverty which they had lived in since becoming a lone-parent family. "Plus I want her to have positive relationships with women," she added, not competitive ones.

Building Character

School performance was seen as the key to success. To improve academically and to handle their future lives well, students were perceived as needing to develop specific characteristics, generally referred to by the schools and the parents as "building character." Building character is the inculcation of characteristics in girls which are seen both as generally missing and as desirable. They are mostly those characteristics which are attributed to boys--risk taking, competitiveness, action, controlling one's own life through an ability to think critically and make good decisions. Building character, said one parent, is "what takes on on the inside" (Arlene, CGS). For parents, building character had several components, including making good decisions, independence, and self-sufficiency. In turn these were defined as the ingredients for success.

Making Good Decisions

In talking about the future lives of their daughters, parents brought together their beliefs about their own past experience, and about the value of education in enabling their daughters to have a secure and safe future. Parents said that they wanted their daughters to have control over their lives--to be able to think things through and make "good" decisions. Good decisions meant not rushing into marriage or having children before their education was completed, choosing a good occupation "but if she wants to be a truck driver it's OK," said one, echoing many such remarks. Choosing a good occupation was judged more in terms of one that satisfied the daughter, but also gave her a secure income. It did not have to be a profession, although a few parents expressed a preference for that, and wanted their daughter to attend university. Most said that any postsecondary training would do, provided she had some kind of certificate or diploma. Marianne (RCJH) said:

> I just want these girls to know that they can do anything they want to--whatever makes them happy. I tell my kids--go to [the institute of technology], learn carpentry, I don't care as long as you get an education

> and you can support yourself.

Making good decisions seemed to mean not being "swept away" or deluded by strong emotions. Rationality was a high priority for parents, and valued especially by the private school's staff also. A parent at RCJH struggled with her concept of what making choices meant. She said:

> If they decide that they would rather have a career than have a family, then I want them to be able to make that choice, not feel guilty about it, and to *make* the choice . . . Like, I mean, and I think that's where the mistake is made, is when people don't make the choices, they just let things happen. . . . You sit down, and you write out--I mean, it sounds very cold and callous, but what are the pros and cons? (Tania, RCJH)

For many parents, having their daughter make rational and informed choices, rather than drifting into a job, marriage or other life choice, was very important. One parent was unique in saying that she wished her daughter could have a more classical education, one in which she had to debate ideas, and learn to be a critical thinker (Janine, RCJH). Such training would give her the skills to make rational choices.

Independence and Self-Sufficiency

Parents expressed strong feelings against any kind of dependency--on a man or on social services. They wanted their daughters to be grow up strong, to be able to deal with issues, to take responsibility for themselves, take care of themselves, be able to be different, integrate babies with a career, not be financially dependent, have stick-with-it-ness and fortitude. Several parents stated specifically that their daughters were not to be dependent on a man, or if so, only for the brief period when they had a baby at home. My interview notes describe one mother as "fiercely determined her daughters will never ever be dependent on a man" (Tania, RCJH). Some also felt the same way about any government services, including student loans. Government programs should be there for emergencies, for example, but not for permanent reliance on them. Dependency, in and of itself, was undesirable, even immoral. The concept of self-sufficiency was important to parents especially. They expected the school to give the students the skills and characteristics to be independent and self-sufficient. One father said he wanted both his children (a boy and a girl) to get "a good solid background that they won't get stuck in the social services net." His wife said she wanted them to be self-sufficient, to which he responded that "self-sufficient is kind of broad . . . but that they'll have something to fall back on. . . . They won't, for lack of better words, be welfare bums" (Pam & Ed). I asked "you mean they will always be able to get a job?" to which Ed replied:

> Yeah, as long as they have got some kind of training other than a high school education they'll be able to get work of some type--it may not be in their kind of field but because they've got a piece of paper from college or university it just may help them.

Pam added "With Grade 12 you may get a job but you won't advance much. My hope for them (daughters) is that they'll be doing something that can support them no matter what," said Britta (RCJH).

This self-sufficiency extended to daycare for a few parents, one of whom said that full time housewives should get a government pension, so they could be independent. Others said their daughters should have a career that enabled them to "support [themselves] and children if they have to" (Janine, RCJH). While mothers tended to emphasize not being dependent on a man, fathers said they wanted their daughters to be economically independent, without specifying any particular situation.

Safety, Success and the Future

The three words which came up most frequently in relation to the future were safety, security and success. Safety and security were a priority for the junior high years, but the desire for their daughters to be safe and secure also encompassed future financial and emotional security. Success encompassed a number of interpretations. For some parents, success meant that their children--daughters or sons--would be happy with whatever lifestyle they had. Success could also mean happiness, emotional stability, achievement, academic success, having a sense of balance, being happy in a relationship, having a job that suits them, "doing well" generally. It could also refer to having a secure income and a lifestyle that was carefully chosen, being safe when on her own through "entering society from a position of strength" (interview notes), and having a good social network. "A successful person is someone who is able to enjoy . . . appreciate and enjoy life and who can link study skills and good work habits with success" (Tania, RCJH).

At both schools, parents pointed to the current job market as "scary," and having far fewer choices for their daughters than when they (the parents) were leaving school (Benton, CGS). Many wanted their daughters to go to university, although a surprising number in both schools did not give this a high priority. "I hope they'll be happy in whatever they're doing, whether it's being a mum, or a business, or a career" (Arlene, CGS). Several parents thought that it was important their daughters gain flexible job skills because the labour market was so tight. They thought it unlikely their daughters would stay in the same occupation all their lives. One claimed that "The way society's going they'll be lucky if they have a permanent job for four or five years" (Koke CGS). Another said "It's a more complex world she lives in, she probably won't have the same career life long, or live in the same place . . . I want my children to be strong and have opportunities" (Catelin, CGS).

Drifting

This contrasts with several mothers who said that they had "just drifted" after high school, getting married young and with few occupational skills. Many wanted to return to school, but were still weighing if they "had what it takes" to go to university. They were *waiting for the right time.*[2] There is a tension visible here between their review of their own lives, and in what they desire for their daughters. It is the tension between being self-supporting, having a career rather than a job and being independent; and being a mother, being responsible for children. It is a tension which is still perceived by these parents and their daughters as belonging to women, not men.

Safety, Success and Gender

These views seemed to me to be in conflict. Daughters were to take on characteristics normally attributed to boys, while keeping many of those considered "feminine" and retaining responsibility for their children. Given the emphasis on rationality and building a character that enabled daughters to have self-confidence, independence and self-sufficiency, I was curious as to what characteristics parents thought should be attributed to males and to females--to what extent, if at all, should they be different? And if they were to be "super woman"--the woman who could have it all, if women were to be this independent and self-sufficient, then I thought the parents must be supportive of feminism. So I asked them how they would feel if their daughter said she was a feminist. Reactions ranged from "so?" to "I would prefer that she not be one of those." For most parents "it depended." The next sections examine parental beliefs about gender and their attitudes to feminism. I conclude by returning to the concept of "gender proofing."

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[2] Currie (1988) found that when making a decision whether or not to have a child, women would often say they were "waiting for the right time," but at the same time, many of them left it to chance. Duffy, Mandell, and Pupo (1989) found that many mothers, reflecting back on decisions to enter the paid workforce, recognised that they had drifted, taking whatever opportunity fitted their other responsibilities and again, came at the right time.

Parental Beliefs About Gender

Most parents said that gender was not an issue. They wanted the same for their daughters as they would, or did, for their sons. What was different was not the outcome, but the means of getting there--that daughters were more vulnerable. Pam, an RCJH mother, reflected on her own experiences, and her desire for her daughter not to marry young as she had done, but also said that she wanted the same thing for her daughter as for her son:

> The most important thing for me for my kids is that they *are* able to think for themselves, and I don't just mean financially but, um, maybe Sara [daughter] comes to mind for me more than anything else but I don't want her to think, um, that in order to succeed in her life that she'd finish school, get married and have to have a family, that she'd have to have a man to make her a complete person, and I guess I haven't thought that far ahead for Mark (son) but it would be my thought too that I want them to be a whole person in themselves before they become somebody else, a partner, that's really important to me. And I want them to live a *hectic* life, like, healthy. I don't mean canoeing and kayaking kind of things, but *keeping busy*. I want them to be busy and focused in their lives and not just sitting and letting life pass them by and turn up at 65 thinking, "Oh poor me, what have I done?"

I asked this couple, "So is it their quality of life, rather than *what* they do?" Both agreed. They wanted their children to be "well rounded citizens." Ed, the father added "Well as long as they stay away from drugs, alcohol and criminal activities." Making everyone laugh, Pam said "I guess we're not asking for much eh? Just well rounded solid citizens I guess, and then their education and everything else will fall into place."

Biological or Social Difference

At a CGS focus group, I was surprised to hear parents agree that sex differences were most likely social rather than biological in origin. Because they had so often talked about boys and girls as being different, I expected them to have based that statement on an assumption of natural differences. But while parents acknowledged that gender was social, they did not want it changed. They thought that difference was a good thing. It was fun, they said, laughing. This is arguably a heterosexual stance. Keeping males and females different has been the tool of both patriarchy and heterosexism according to many writers such as Bem (1993). I wondered whether such a concept of gender was there because it supported heterosexuality as "normal" or "right." It seemed to connect with earlier concerns about "social skills" which Watson (1996) argues are code for concerns about homosexuality in single-sex schools. This is something that should be included in future research.

The interviews reveal parents' ideas about femininity, and in some cases, masculinity also. Their perceptions, beliefs and decisions are based on particular assumptions about how a man or a woman *is*. They also hold beliefs about how men and women *should* be. These inform their thinking, and reveal different conceptualizations of gender.

Femininity and Masculinity:

Girls are described as different from boys--more cooperative and caring, less of a discipline problem, more pliant. They are less independent, less willing to take risks. Parents wanted their daughters not to lose their "feminine" qualities, but to add on to them. They wanted them to be able to enter relationships from a position of independence, rather than dependence, either psychologically or financially, so that the division of labour could be more equal, or at least consciously agreed to rather than assumed. They continued to see the mother as the primary caregiver, who would take responsibility for any children should a marriage end. They did not want their daughters to have children without a partner, however. Having a child alone while young was recognized as a quick route to poverty, and single parenting at any age as something which would undermine the possibility of a secure future. Mothers in particular, who saw themselves as having drifted, or even as still doing so rather than taking control of their lives, wanted to ensure their daughters would act differently. Their focus was on the acquisition of self-esteem and skills so that their daughters would take control of their lives. Fathers held the same goals, but focused on behaviour and performance in school more than on the avoidance of early marriage afterwards.

When I asked what femininity meant to the parents, there was a great range of responses from "the woman is the glue in the marriage (Rene, RCJH)" and "I want my daughter to remain feminine" from a father (Daryl, CGS), to "My mother always worked, and her only advice to me when I left home was to make sure I had my own money somewhere" (Pam, RCJH). Another said:

> But I think for my kids I just want them to choose for themselves. . . . I think I'd be thrilled if my son stayed home with his child because he'd be good at it . . . and if my daughter chose not to, that would be good too. (Janine, RCJH)

Many parents, such as Arlene (CGS) argued that although women were naturally more suited to mothering, femininity could be fairly fluid, as long as it excluded aggressiveness. It was not always clear, however, where assertiveness or competitiveness ended, and aggressiveness began. Some argued that women should not be competitive, while other parents felt they had to be. A few commented that girls could be just as cruel as boys. Cecilia told of a daughter who was victimized by other girls. "It was really violent" she said.

A father said that there were physical differences which should be taken into account when hiring for particular occupations such as mail carrier, but that also some organizations could be designed differently to recognize women's differences and responsibilities. "Women have more responsibilities than men do," he said. "It isn't necessarily injuries that lead to time off work--it's family responsibilities" (Brian, RCJH). Throughout the interviews most parents appeared to accept that women are primarily responsible for children, although men "should help." The justification in this lay in women's reproductive role, including breast feeding, but also in their character as carers and nurturers. However, it was important that:

> Early in life they should find out they can actually stand on their own . . . because . . . in some cases . . . a lot of women stay in bad marriages because they're frightened of being alone, especially with kids. (Arlene, CGS)

In talking about masculinity, a few parents said that they monitored their sons' behaviour to see that it didn't "go too far"--was not too influenced by peer groups. Several parents of sons (mothers and fathers) commented that there needed to be different standards of acceptance for what "boys will be boys" means--that the present dismissal of adolescent male behaviour was not acceptable. They are given permission to treat girls badly, they said, and a father used the term "brutal" to girls. Boys are belligerent, and that has to stop. A parent teacher told of a boy who was "relentless" in harassing girls at her school. "There's a bit of him in many of the kinds of behaviours that I see," she said. Boys do behave differently, but limits should be put on them. Many, however, seemed to regard boys' behaviour as natural and inevitable, and to see the solution as toughening up or giving the girls more confidence to stand up to them.

Gender permeates peer culture, so that it is easy to conflate the two. The public school, however, demonstrates the underlying hierarchy of a peer culture which becomes patriarchal in a coed school. Boys are described as the leaders in a classroom or peer group, the ones who decide what's cool, the ones with the social power. Boys are less mature than girls, say parents and teachers, but their presence is more powerful. They will get better as they mature, or just need to learn "manners."

The Gendered Division of Labour

Several parents had traded roles at different times, while others were following what is often taken as a more traditional family model, although they did so for varying reasons. One couple "went with whoever had the job . . . we just had to manage" to survive. They wanted for her to stay home and for him to work, but while he was a student in particular, they had traded roles. She had never worked full-time at the same time as her husband, however. They said that it had helped them understand each other better, telling the story of the husband coming home, looking at the house in a mess, and asking her what she had done all day. She asked him if *he* had had a coffee break at work. (Susan & Brian, RCJH). A second couple had the mother working full-time, and the father part-time since he had taken an early retirement, so he did quite a bit of the parenting and housework.

But couples who had traded roles in terms of income earning, did not necessarily extend that to household duties. Susan (RCJH) said, "In terms of duties I cook, shop, do the laundry and he keeps care of the lawn and the car. It doesn't change when I work part-time. We've never both worked full-time." At this time, she told me, she worked the evening shift, so was home during the day. She has been more on top of child care/discipline, she said, and he has "been available if required."

A student in another family told me that her "Dad looked after me as much as Mum did," because her father also had been a student when she was a baby, and her mother had been the primary income earner. Parents mostly said that they had raised their male and female children the same--with the same responsibilities for household chores, and the same range of toys. Some had raised their daughters to believe that if they had children they had to stay home with them. Others thought that the father should also take responsibility for childcare.

Feminism

If daughters were to be nurturing, nonaggressive, independent and self-sufficient, risk-takers who were in control of their own lives, one might expect that parents would support feminism. Not all parents were aware that the founding group of parents at RCJH had included a specifically feminist approach to their innovative curiculum, so I asked them about the possibility of their daughters becoming feminist, and about the women's studies component in the schools.

One parent declared the public school to be a feminist school, and another was described by a friend as having removed his daughter because "he says it's because the academics aren't good enough, but I believe it is the feminist issue. I would not want my daughter to be radical, but I would support her being a feminist" (Brian). Reactions to feminism varied on a continuum from negative to "it depends" to positive.

Negative Reactions

Some parents did not like the idea at all. "I don't buy into that feminism stuff" said one. "Feminists get the business of equity mixed up. The sexes are different from the very beginning. I don't want to be a man" (Tonia RCJH). Another said "I don't want to be a man, but I want to be listened to and respected" (Jenn, RCJH). And Marianne (RCJH) said after some thought:

> I think feminists are, er, I don't know, maybe it's a negative connotation, the word does, in that, er, it's a female only, you know, point of view, and I don't like that, I mean, it's not women alone that live in the world.

Among many parents, feminism was mostly seen as "derogatory," as having a negative attitude towards men. A parent at CGS commented, in response to the question, that:

> [School staff] try very hard to tell these girls that you have strengths you can use and you should use, but [they] also try . . . to tell them that you do not have to do that at the expense of anyone else, male or female. (Arlene)

Feminism was seen by this group as antimotherhood, as priorizing career over family, as wanting to be a man but also in an apparent contadiction, as hating men. Parents opposed to feminism often pointed to the benefits of breastfeeding as justification for the primary role of the mother in childcare, and as a justification for the essential difference of women and men.

Many parents thought that feminism is exclusive toward men, and yet they would also say that "men have got to learn" to treat women better. However, women should not descend to their level and act like them in order to get that respect (Melinda, RCJH; CGS focus group). This meant not being aggressive. Militant feminists get the movement a bad name, they said. "Women are the nurturers and men need nurturing" (Tonia, RCJH).

It Depends

Several parents were cautious and had some parameters to their support of feminism. "My reaction would be 'what does that mean to you?'" said Marianne (RCJH) when I asked her about her daughter saying she was a feminist. Betty (RCJH) also responded this way. And another commented: "I don't think [it would bother me]--as long as it's legal!" (laughter). Her husband commented, "The media blows everything out of proportion" (RCJH focus group). Other parents would be comfortable with a feminist daughter as long as it was not the confrontational type of feminism. They too did not like aggression. The mother quoted above said "I'm not really a feminist, because I just want everybody to be treated equally" (Tonia, RCJH). Her perception was that feminists wanted to be superior to men.

Positive Reactions

Some parents said they would be proud to have their daughter a feminist, one even said, "She damn well better be!" Many said, however, that girls should be equal to boys, but they should not be the same as boys. There was support for equal rights and for respect toward women, but an emphasis on their difference, and this came from those opposed to feminism, as well as those who supported it either to some extent or fully. There were frequent riders attached by those who said they were supportive of feminism. For example, they would rather their daughter was not radical in her feminism. "Some are a little too radical," said one cautiously, but another responded "Hooray [if she decides she's a feminist]. I want her to be proud of being a feminist. Like feminist is a dirty word" (Cecilia, CGS).

A father thought that "The feminist revolution has been 90% positive" and that now the focus needs to be on changing men "That men think they ought to be in charge of things is so stupid," he said (Peter CGS). He told me that at one point in his life he had thought his *job* was to tell his wife what to do, that women needed male guidance. Since learning that was not the case, partly through seeing his wife's business skills, he had begun to enjoy his family a good deal more. It was less stressful for him. Another father commented:

> I think feminism is fantastic. I think the movement's past roots are good and sincere and I'm behind it 100%. We needed a bomb to shock us . . . everyone has their own idea of what feminism means, and then they don't like it. . . . If [daughter] is a feminist, that's what I'm paying for. (Phil, CGS)

His wife, however, was less sure. "I haven't seen much feminism in my life" she said, but some feminist women she knew seemed to be priorizing feminism over their marriage, and she did not agree with that. "This feminine independent thing" can go too far, she said. So these independent young women were not to be too independent, and most of the parents were either not in support of their daughter being a feminist, or were cautious about it.

Women's Studies Component

When I asked about the women's studies component of both schools' curricula, some parents were not aware of it at all, while others thought that it was all right if it "did not interfere with the main curriculum." Others liked it and thought it was important to the students. Arlene said:

> I like it as long as it's not overdone to the point that, hey, if it's male it's no good. Why shouldn't they see what women can do, you know, it's a good incentive for them.

"I like it as long as it's not overdone," seemed to be the most frequent parental view of the women's studies component. Cecilia (CGS), in a surprised tone, commented:

> And the interesting thing about that is that it was done, I think, without in any way deflecting from what was happening in that period in history--it's very complementary to it.

As long as it did not detract from the things they needed to learn, women's studies was seen as a good incentive, a model for the students of what they could achieve. In talking about feminism, however, many parents seemed to conflate "women" with "feminist." In other words, if women were singled out for study, that was "feminist." The assumption was that the existing curriculum was about "people."

Most parents insisted that women and men are different. Generally they did not want women to be given special treatment, and were mostly opposed to affirmative action, even when they were positive about feminism. Affirmative action was seen as unfair to men and demeaning to women. The father who strongly supported feminism felt that affirmative action was discriminatory, because it automatically segregates a group, and means quotas. "It robs you and me of who we really are," he said. "I'm calling for equal opportunity," said one, not special treatment. I was puzzled by this, since they were giving their daughters "special treatment" for many of what I saw as the same reasons that led to affirmative action and equal opportunity programs, such as encouragement to achieve and the provision of good role models. Their concerns about feminism and opposition to affirmative action did not equate, as far as I could see, with their desire to have their daughters be independent, self-sufficient, competitive risk-taking women.

It seems appropriate to insert an excerpt from student comments here, because it indicates a possible reason for the caution of parents. A student group at RCJH said that they would shy away from feminism because an all-girls' school could "label us as second best. We're just the same as boys and 'let the best *man* win.'" What I thought was happening was first, that students thought men *would be* a large part of their future lives, and therefore it was unwise to take up an antimale stance, and secondly, they perceived success as male. To be successful meant to be like (as good as) a man. At the same time, they were learning to do so in a separate environment, because "people" acting like men had caused them problems. They were being separated out in order to be added in. And their parents are saying that they want their daughters to be independent and self-sufficient, but not feminists, which they perceive as trying to be superior to men, and as hating men. This is why aggression is not acceptable in women. They must still like/get along with, and in the future, marry, men, and be like them as well.

Gender Proofing

At the heart of safety, security and success, and of the choice of an all-girls' school, is a belief that girls need to develop confidence and self-esteem, and to "build character." They need to take on characteristics usually attributed to boys--risk-taking, independence, self-sufficiency, the ability to make good (i.e., rational) decisions.

Junior high school is often cited as the time when girls need to be segregated. This is *gender proofing,* or giving girls what they need to ignore distraction and confront sexism, and to achieve their own goals. At the same time, these girls are not to be feminists. Gender proofing allows them to remain feminine, but not feminist, but also to be a strong woman with some masculine characteristics. A strong woman has confidence and determination. One parent said, "I would pay anything for that [confidence], absolutely anything." (Arlene, CGS). Gender proofing will enable girls to cope with a discriminating coed world, help them to feel good about themselves, and to be strong, leaders and achievers, but also to be "gender missionaries"--they will change the behaviour of boys/men through standing up to, and educating them. They will not become vulnerable to harassment, or to poverty due to early pregnancy, or to insecure and unsatisfactory jobs. They will enter relationships from a position of strength. And they will take control of their lives and pursue their goals through good decisions. They will not do as other women do. . . .

Discussion

Parents want their children to have a successful future, which they define in terms of occupational security, a steady income, and satisfaction/happiness with life. They see hard work, motivation and discipline as prerequisites for this, and also see daughters as more vulnerable than sons, and are more protective of them. Daughters need more self-esteem, less distraction, some time out to gain confidence and improve their academic performance. Parents reflect back on their own actions, judging themselves responsible for what they see as the defects in their careers, often as not doing as well as they could have done. They want their daughters to avoid the mistakes they see themselves as having made. Fathers focus on not working hard in school, and mothers on drifting, and getting married young rather than first establishing a career. Their goal is to choose a school which will motivate and give the necessary skills to their daughters be be successful, and through that, safe in the future.

For public school parents, safety is to be accomplished through segregation from boys, and for private school parents, through being in smaller classes, and in a disciplined environment. For several parents, this segregation amounted to cloistering, to a desire to preserve the innocence of their daughters, and keep them away from sexual activities, which they saw as beginning at too young an age in coeducational schools. Underlying their protectiveness, therefore, is a concern about sexuality. Since sexual activity is common in adolescent years, that would not seem to be unreasonable. Cloistering at least during the day is one way to keep the girls celibate, and allows them distance to rethink their priorities. Beyond choosing celibacy, many parents would rather that their daughters not even think about sex.

Most parents chose the school for their daughters, giving them little say in the decision. This contrasts with their goal of making their daughters independent and self-sufficient. They were protecting them from distraction and discrimination in order to enable them to gain the courage and motivation not to be distracted and discriminated against in the future. Protectiveness and safety can also be seen as control. If a daughter is given little choice of school, and is sent to one in which she has little choice of clothing as well, it is possible that she is to be given little choice in other areas of her life. These are students who are being driven to priorize school, and do well academically. If they have any activities outside of school work, they are often in parentally approved activities such as drama or sports. At CGS even this is not possible. McRobbie (1978, 1991) and Van Roosmalen and Krahn (1996) have documented the tendency of parents to exercize greater control over their daughters. In concerns about daughters greater vulnerability, and in their limited control over their lives, I saw strong parental control. The paradox is that the control was justified in terms of greater self-sufficiency and independence for their daughters.

The girls are to be separated out in order to be added in to a predominantly male world. It is not the boys who are to change. It is the girls who are to remain feminine but take on many male qualities. Parents wanted their daughters to be successful in terms of taking control over their own lives, and developing a satisfying career and egalitarian relationships. They were to accomplish this through the building of character, development of confidence, and learning how to make good decisions that would enable them to be independent and self-sufficient. Parents were gender proofing their daughters against a world that discriminates against women, so that they would be successful. Very few of the parents addressed structural issues. Most saw the key to equal opportunities for women as residing in the women themselves. Further, the social institutions which these girls were to enter, such as the job market and a family of their own, were not addressed as something that could or should be changed, but rather as something that the girls needed to enter in a different manner, with a different attitude from the one with which they had entered the school.

The parents perceived gender as mostly the result of socialization, and as based on difference. They had no wish to change the difference, but they did want to make adjustments to femininity such that their daughters would be safe and successful. Difference, they said, was fun. Added to the attitudes to feminism of most parents, and the equating of feminist with aggressive, masculine and man-hating with lesbian, the "fun" would appear to imply heterosexuality. However, this is a sexuality that is to be postponed, delayed until a career is well established, "until she's 27."

Parents also were cautious about women's studies, which they saw as potentially distracting from the "real" curriculum which is about people. In this, as in their desire to improve on femininity by adding in some masculine characteristics, they were reproducing the male, and heterosexuality, as the norm, in turn reproducing patriarchy through androcentrism and an emphasis on difference (Bem, 1993). They were proofing their daughters for an unchanged public and private world.

CHAPTER 7

"WE FEEL LIKE WE BELONG HERE": STUDENTS' VIEWS ON BEING SEGREGATED

The students were interviewed in the summer and fall of 1996. While some of their responses to my questions echoed those of their parents, they also had some different views on what it was like to be first in a coeducational and then in an all-girls' school. Their responses were much more direct than those of their parents, in ways that were sometimes quite breathtaking to hear. This directness and the simplicity of their expression stand in contrast to the academic language in which much theory of gender is presented, and yet also contribute to it vividly. For this reason I have quoted them at greater length. While I have attempted to follow the same organizational structure in this chapter, so that parental and student responses can be compared, it has not always been possible. For example, parents did not talk about peer culture in the same way, generally only referring to it in terms of distraction or harassment and bullying.

The chapter begins with the students' version of why they went to the school. I then discuss their comments on their previous schools. This provides stories which illustrate what led many parents to view a girls' school as a safer environment, physically, emotionally and intellectually. The next section discusses the girls' own feelings of safety in their new school, and incorporates their comments about improvements to their academic performance and their self-confidence which might be seen as the first indications of the success sought by their parents. At Christian Girls' School (CGS), the students also talk about cloistering but as much in terms of isolation, as of safety. I then record their thoughts in regard to feminism, and to careers and families, and describe their frustration with media interest in the public school. At the end of the chapter, I summarize what the students told me, and compare their responses to those of their parents.

Reasons for Going

Overwhelmingly the students said that they had not wanted to go to an all-girls' school, but that now they were there, they liked it. One or two had seen information on one of the schools and told a parent about it, or had a friend who was going and wanted to stay with the friend. Most, however, would say "Mum made me," and it was always "mum," which would seem to reaffirm the finding discussed in chapter 6 that it is mothers who are perceived as being in charge of children's, and especially daughters' education.

Several students told me that they were not doing well in their previous school, for a number of reasons. Sometimes it was due to the "distractions" of peers, particularly boys, sometimes it was due to being "outed"--being harassed and denigrated by peers, but sometimes also it was due to poor teaching or crowded classes. I heard stories of teachers who still told girls they "could not" do math, or of being told to "shut up and learn." A CGS student said:

> Well I went to Y school, and it just . . the education there kind of sucked, [the teachers didn't really seem to care about anything], and my parents wanted me to go to CGS. . . . The smaller classes are good because it's, the teachers can talk to you more and explain things. (Rachel)

And Julie said that "The public school system doesn't support students. At CGS teachers trust and challenge them."

Several students accepted that they themselves needed to change:

> I wasn't doing too good . . . [students in her previous school focused on how they looked], I was getting sick of that and wanted to change. I wanted to feel better about myself and be smarter. (Patricia, CGS)

At a CGS Grade 8 and 9 focus group I was told:

> I wanted to see what it was like to change.
>
> Well I thought it would be full of snobs. When I came here for the first time I liked it.
>
> I basically came because I was getting pretty bad marks in public school and my mum thought a change would be good.

> My parents wanted me to get better marks.
>
> I was being a really bad girl and it was a threat at first, and maybe she'd get better marks--she'd be able to read and wouldn't be at the bottom. If I could get good marks, and then I could actually go back to public school.
>
> I'd get teased about being the low person in the school, and not knowing how to read and stuff and I came for the tour and Mr N [headmaster] kind of scared me and all that [laughter]. It was pretty good and I liked the tour. I had no idea we'd be camping and all this stuff. I thought we'd be just learning and going home at 4.30 but what I didn't know is we'd be here until 6 o'clock, get home at 6 at night, and doing all that exploratory and stuff, but I liked it.
>
> I was kind of forced to come here. I was getting really bad marks--wasn't paying attention in school. I kind of mouthed off to my teachers. Mother told me I was enrolled.

At CGS the students wanted to (or were told they had to) change their behaviours and their school grades. The focus was on a change in behaviour as a prerequisite for better school performance. Although parents talked about peer group influence, the students clearly focused on and blamed themselves for their past performance, and those who had been "bad" girls freely accepted responsibility for their behaviour. Some told me that they knew they had been sent to the school to separate them from their past friends, and to "make" them behave better, and apply themselves to their school work. At RCJH, students focused mainly on improving in their academic performance, and had much less to say about their previous behaviour. They also had some interesting images of what the school would be like:

> Well, when Mum first told me about RCJH, I'm like, I was worried it was going to be a boarding school--you know I wouldn't be able to come home for a month or something. I'm like, "Mum, you wouldn't send me to a boarding school would you?" And she goes, "No." Well I just had this concern that RCJH would be like that coz, um, you know if it's an all-girls' school. I have this book at home. It's *Mother May I?* and it's about this all-girls' school, and I'm reflecting back to my--is this school like this? (Lenora)

"How do you feel now?" I asked, and Lenora replied "I'm definitely glad I came." Kirsten said "Well I just kind of wanted to be with my friends I guess." I asked if she minded that it was an all-girls' school and she said "I was fine with it. It didn't really matter to me. It was kind of weird to think about, but. . . . " I asked, "In what way was it weird?" "I don't know [laughs]. Um, different I guess. I had the idea it would be a boarding school." Tonia's response to my question as to why she enrolled was instant:

> My Mom made me! Like at the beginning, when she first found out about it, she said, I was gonna go, I was gonna go. She signed me up at both schools--the public one and this one, and then she said, "OK you don't have to go," and then two days before I went she says, "You're going to that all-girls' school," and I was like [draws in a breath], "I don't want to go," and I really didn't want to go, but, I did.[1]
>
> Let's talk about why you didn't want to go. (Interviewer)
>
> I don't know, . . . like I thought it would be like a boarding school, and so much trouble, and you're bad for going there and stuff like that . . . and plus like, well I didn't have very many friends at my old school, but I wanted to stay at that school because I'm new around that community, and I didn't know if I was going to make friends at that school and that now, and I was a little bit scared.

A girls' school was perceived as a boarding school, sometimes also associated with being religious, seen as private and elite, and as very disciplined. This seemed to connect to the view that an all-girls' school would be for "bad" girls which was repeated by several students. The obverse was that some thought it would be full of "good" girls and snobs. Good girls were those who were brainy and obedient. Bad girls were those who were rude to the teachers, didn't do their homework or partied a lot. This view was reinforced by the uniform, which was in turn associated with private and boarding schools. At CGS the view was probably also reinforced by the presence of several girls who were there due to past "bad" behaviour. However, this view of a private school was expressed differently by the parents. Rather, when they had a problem daughter, they saw the private school as the solution where she could no longer be bad because she would be isolated from her friends, and more closely supervised by staff.

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[1] Several RCJH students referred to their coeducational primary schools as "the public school" as compared to "this one." There were insufficient examples to draw any general conclusion, but it calls for further examination. Was this an extension of "people" both as in referring to boys, and as in the curriculum being about people? In other words, is coed school equated with "male school," and seen as the standard?

Academics was the main reason that all of the students believed they were at the school, and there were several disclaimers that it had anything to do with boys:

> Er, well I didn't come here because--oh goody no boys-- you know what I mean? I've had lots of boys, friends, like, not like boyfriends but . . . and like, so, that's one thing I missed here, but mainly because my parents thought I wasn't getting the education I should have and so this school sounded very good for this education. (Erica, RCJH)

Or Merry at CGS:

> My mum and dad thought, you know, "Hey, it might be a good idea for our kids to get a better education," and so they sort of dropped us in there! [laughter]

This student actually wanted to go, and thought she would have done better if she'd been there for her first year of junior high. She said the teachers in her public school seemed "very loud and abusive" to her, and that she "basically sat up there at the back of the classroom, and, you know, told to shut up and learn." Students also said they were glad to be there, as several put it, "because of confidence and stuff."

The Coeducational Experience

Two Grade 7s at RCJH said:

> If you were dumb and you were a boy, that was, you were just making a mistake. But if you were dumb and you were a girl, it was because you were a girl.

> But I found that a lot of the boys were like, popular and . . . would . . . and they called you names in the hallways and stuff and a lot of the guys weren't, like being bad--you could tell they were joking, and then you'd be like, oh yeah, you're a blank blank back--it wasn't, like it wasn't hostile. (Anna & Desiree, RCJH)

I asked Tonia: "Was it everyone that teased you, or was it one particular group that teased you?"

> Well in that school there was popular and unpopular people, so, and I was one of the *un*popular, so all the popular ones liked to tease the unpopular ones. (Tonia, RCJH)
>
> What were the grounds--what made you unpopular? (Interviewer)
>
> I don't know. It's like people being mature or immature--and I don't know how they get that, but some people act too mature or immature and . . . like say there's a Grade fiver going out with a boy or something like that, then they're considered mature, you know . . . acting older than the age you are. . . . I wasn't known as my name. I was known as a . . . up to . . . a rude word, and a few of the guys were nice to me, they were really nice to me and they stuck up for me and stuff like that, but otherwise, all the unpopular people were known as a rude word, they didn't really have a name.

Girls who had been harrassed knew it was wrong but believed it could not be changed and were afraid to "squeal" because they knew it would lose them friends. One said that most of her girlfriends deserted her when the boys' group they hung out with "outed" her for being "too fat," with just two staying with her. Those who left her were afraid they would lose their own popularity rating.

Most students identified the boys as the ring leaders. It was the boys "who point out girls' failings," and who "call girls names . . . sometimes you get them mad or something, they just sort of [call you names, outcast you]." (Lenora RCJH). "It was just the boys that really were, like, you know, the people who were being mean."

> Being mean about appearance? (Interviewer)
>
> Yeah, like you know, about your weight and stuff, but I really don't think there was a whole lot of. . . . There might have been a couple of. . . . But if

> somebody wore something that was completely awful . . . we didn't judge her.

I did not explore how "completely awful" was measured, however. I asked instead, "Judge on weight but not clothes?"

> Yeah. (Heather, RCJH)

A CGS focus group said:

> Guys had all the control--you're a loser, you're not, you've got nice legs [laughter] . . . if you weren't in that kind of group, then you were no-one, you were just a loser, you don't belong here. (CGS focus group)

Heather and Erica, RCJH:

> People were like, watching over me, watching everything I did, and, I realized in my class, the boys, if they found something wrong . . . like *that* was your reputation, they would always get you for that. (Erica)

Erica said that when her mother put a marshmallow in her lunch, students would watch her eating it and make remarks about how fat she was. She got so that she would "just nibble." She was afraid to eat. I asked, "So the boys were the leaders--the ones who decided who was in and who was out?"

> Well kind of because the girls all wanted to be the boys' friend, because like, if you'd look at their relationships they'd be like, ooh, I want to go out with him, or blah, blah, blah, blah, and then, once you, um, yeah, I guess they do, but like, I guess, I guess if the boys in my class never liked my friend it didn't really matter to me because they were still that person and . . . because, um . . . in Grade 6 I was considered not OK, because all the girls who went to my school were like skinny and like [boney], and I guess I was considered fat, and so, it was really hard for me because like in gym and stuff I wouldn't try as hard as I could because I'd feel that I would be made fun of if I tried hard and then didn't succeed in what I did. (Heather)

> They, because they [boys] *are* the rulers of the class and a lot of girls are afraid to stick up to them and they, and like if the boys say, you know, "Hey lets fool around," [but] this year there aren't many, there are rulers of the class but there's a lot of them, and they're almost equal, as in the boys rule the girls, and I noticed that last year, I know the boys got all the attention in gym, and they'd split the boys and girls up and the boys would do volleyball and the girls would do volleyball, and the girls didn't really

> know how to play volleyball that much, but the boys did, so the teacher watched the boys . . . and the girls . . . didn't know what to do . . . so I noticed that in the gym, the teachers watched the boys way more, and paid way more attention and I complained about that. (Erica)

Erica's mother went to the teacher who promised to pay more attention to the girls, but nothing changed.

> There's more competition in coed because I think girls are like competing to get into the factions of the boys and then you get all dressed up, and then they're like you're this--blah blah blah--you won't attract this guy--stuff like that [boys point out girls' failings, or rate them]. (Lenora, RCJH)

More such stories were told at CGS, sometimes of even more potentially harmful incidents and reactions, such as students who said that popular girls would pick on the other girls, and that the boys would egg them on, especially to fight over a boy. One student in a group at CGS told me that she had been suicidal at one time because she was so seriously "outed" that she saw no reason to continue living:

> It got me to the point that I was just a nervous wreck. I was like I didn't even want to go to school, er, suicidal, like just nobody likes me, I have no friends I want to be with, like part of the popular group, I can't be that so there's no point.
>
> Why were they picking on you? (Interviewer)
>
> Um, because I had lower marks than average, and I didn't have the prettiest eyes or the longest legs or stuff like that--braces [on teeth], you know, stuff like that. It was like, you know, it was like everybody look at you or else.

All this student wanted was to be in a popular group, but they all picked on her--for getting low grades, for having braces on her teeth "anything really." Another left her school after laying charges against a boy who raped her. She was "outed" by all of her peers for turning him in.

Often the reaction to this bullying by girls and boys was to diffuse and normalize it. I noticed throughout the interviews that both adults and students would refer to "people" when they were talking about only one of the sexes.

Students would talk about "friends" whether they were talking about girls or a mixed group. Or if they distinguished between boys' and girls' behaviour, they would dismiss harrassment and taunts by saying it was "just some boys," or "just the jerks." I think there might be linkage between this normalization or dilution of responsibility and another set of expressions. Many times I heard the comment that "my [brother, father, uncle, boyfriend] (and with parents it was the son, husband), is not like that. Other men may be like that but my men are not." There is an element of loyalty here, but also of denial of structural constraints. It may be that, as Lorber (1994) argues, trying to become aware of gender is like getting a fish to notice the water in which it is swimming. Perhaps also a belief that everything is all right now, that we are becoming more egalitarian and accepting, makes it difficult to see evidence to the contrary.

The All-Girls' Experience

Climate

"Climate" is a word which has come into use in connection with discrimination in educational establishments in particular (Caplan, 1993; Bannerji, Carty, Dehli, Heald & McKenna, 1991). A "chilly climate" refers to an environment in which minority group members are not made to feel welcome.The students' descriptions of their previous schools often made them sound as if they had experienced a chilly climate there, such as the girls who said they were rated by the boys as they went to the washroom, or who were not included in sports activities.

While most students treated such occurences as normal, when they compared their previous school to their present situation, the contrast was quite dramatic. This was especially true of RCJH, which, since it was a public school, retained the core curriculum and the organization of a public school, and a peer culture that was strikingly similar in its basic hierarchy. Perhaps because of this similarity, the students themselves seemed unaware of the impact of what they were saying. Several times, both in their groups, and individually, they would say "it isn't really any different here--just no boys" or "it just becomes normal here" (Lenora, Erica, Heather, & Grade 7 focus group notes, RCJH), but then they would add "but the curriculum is different and the relationships are different and . . ." until eventually I made a list:

> the atmosphere is different
> the curriculum is different
> we wear a uniform
> the teaching is different
> who sets the rules is different
> it's more peaceful here
> relationships with teachers are different
> relationships with other students are different
> we have more confidence
> we get to do more here
> we're more successful here
> we're doing more girls' stuff
> we get to go on more field trips
> it's freer here

As two Grade 7s told me:

> Yeah, er, I think that there isn't much of a difference personally, like, I don't see that there's such a huge difference in the classroom because like, boys are the bad behavers in class, and girls are the good behavers. . . . It's the same really except there's no boys. (Heather & Erica, RCJH)

I asked, "So the curriculum is the same, and the way you interact with the teachers is the same?" To which both students said, "No, the curriculum isn't." "OK," I said, "What is the same--let's look at what's the same and then tell me anything that's different." Both began "core subjects are the same." This was about as far as the sameness comparison could go. Like many other students, they then began to list the differences, which included being better friends with the teachers and with each other, feeling very supported by other girls, being able to perform better without boys around, and having a more "peaceful" environment. Some other RCJH student comments included:

> Well one thing I noticed with my old school there was always the one person who didn't have any friends, and in this school everybody seems to have a friend. (Leanne, RCJH)
>
> Friends respect you for who you are here. (Amy, RCJH)
>
> I guess, I guess, I feel if I was ever considering leaving the big thing for me would be the friends I made here of my teachers and my gym program, because I think the rest of the stuff I would get in another school. It's just there's some things that make this school special, and like, that's one of the biggest things to me, that I feel good about, that's why I came here, my gym, because I saw myself shrink in size, coz I'm more active and I can believe in myself, so that's it. (Heather, RCJH)
>
> Yeah . . . and that's a huge difference to me, is because you're not competing with boys and you're going through the same things as girls are, so it's not . . . a lot different . . . [here]. I just seem to have so many friends, and I seem to be higher [in status] in the class. (Erica, RCJH)

Other comments from students at RCJH included:

> It's just more peaceful what we do in class is different.
>
> It's more quieter and stuff.
>
> Better feeling between us because we're doing more girls' stuff and that we wouldn't actually do if we were in a boys' class.

There is a fear of boys at times. For example, a student said when she was outcast, few of her friends would stand up for her. They didn't want to compromise their own popularity with the boys. But the students wanted me to understand that they did not hate boys. They just wanted to be left alone to get on with their work, again saying "it's so peaceful here."

At the private school the peer culture is very different. Because most of the students and staff are resident on the property, they interact in a wide range of circumstances from classroom to meal times to caring for the livestock. Many of the more usual boundaries between staff and students are thinner if not absent in these conditions. It makes for a more friendly environment, but at the same time makes it more difficult for students to be critical. It becomes very much "their" school, their family:

> The teachers are better, because it's like you're friends, they're not just a teacher.
>
> Well . . . the other students. You can't change . . . the way they are. And being in four [class] rooms. Um, the fact that the teachers are teachers, they're not, they're not, well, they're your friends but it's different.
>
> So there's still a difference there? (Interviewer)
>
> Yeah . . . you get to know [teachers and students] better than you would in the public school, because you do the outdoor, like the snowshoeing and the hiking, and you do a lot more things with them, so you get to know them better. (Rachel, CGS)
>
> I'd encourage [potential students] to see the other side rather than the discipline, and make them see the benefits, because the school does give a lot of benefits too . . . um, the friendships you have, basically there you make friends for life is what they are, um, you make friends with the staff, like the staff are incredibly friendly towards students, um, you get into, sometimes you can get into groups, but you let other people in, you're like friends with everybody . . . they're very open . . . support. The school gives a tremendous amount of support. (Merry, CGS)

And Carla told me:

> Some teachers in the public school were sexist. Like here, they can't be. So you don't have to take that . . . yeah, like the teachers here really know you well . . . they actually care.

Earlier Carla had told me that at her previous school, some of the teachers didn't even know her name. Carla was frustrated by being told that she could not wear makeup, but then realized:

> After awhile it clicks in--there's no one to impress. [We] do dress up a bit when we're singing, but we try to make it look as natural as possible . . . most of the time after I came here I found out I was wrong and stuff. I would compare students to types in my previous school, and then I found out it was pretty different here . . . you get super close to a person here, and then it just stays like that.

Freedom

Many students commented on the freedom of their all-girls' school. While many seemed to want to deny the impact of discrimination, they certainly noticed its absence in terms of feeling able to speak in class, able to be themselves, and of being *trusted*. They were expected to do well and to get along with everyone in the school, rather than, I suspect from their own words, being treated as stupid, or if they stood up for themselves as a bitch or too aggressive. Tania (RCJH) said "you can be more free in this school." Heather at RCJH commented that she appreciated being able to participate in sports more:

> Lots of times boys tend to be more athletic than girls, and that's usually what happens, and in this school you have a bigger chance of making the teams, and you feel much more confident and I really enjoy the PE program, and that's what I really like about my school.

I asked Merry, at CGS, if she felt the environment as safer. Her response to the word "safety" operates at several levels, just as it did for parents. She feels physically safe, but also emotionally and intellectually safe:

> A lot safer, because well, we're out in the boonies, you know, not much can happen, but, you have surrounding neighbours who constantly come in and they support you and stuff, the parents are giving you this trust, and they're sending you out there and in, trust that you're going to get a better education, the teachers trust you to an extent, the students trust you to an extent, you're just surrounded with trust, and it's so much safer, like I mean if I was in [previous school], I felt so exposed, because you know there's so many people and, if a reputation gets out, you're basically dead. So . . . it's so safe . . . they prepare you for the stress that's going to come ahead. Like in Grade 11 there's so much homework that you have to deal with it, there's not a choice there. You have to deal with it. So basically they get you prepared, it's sort of like a battlefield, you know, you're in the stands and if someone's coming towards you and they're about to kill you, you have to do something to cope with that, and that's what they're trying to do. They're trying to put you in the situation, get you to think about it, get you to cope, and then get yourself away from it, is what they're trying to do. . . . I'm surrounded in the atmosphere of students who actually care. In my former school, it was like, oh you're just a fly on the wall, you know, squish yer. Here there's so much trust and there's just, it's just, I can't explain the atmosphere. . . . In CGS when I first arrived here, I got this

> attitude or this atmosphere, it was just, "Welcome, hi, how are you doing," and stuff like that. It was a nice atmosphere.

Here, said Tracy (CGS)

> You learn to associate with boys. You learn who you are. It makes you more self-confident. Before I felt awkward, I was unsure of myself and it showed. Now I can treat boys like equals. Not superior but different . . . people are people

As she said this, I thought, she means people really are people in this school. She is not using the word as code for boys. Throughout the analysis of interview data I came across passages such as this, where I saw multiple meanings in the words and phrases of participants. Knowing when to take words literally, and when to look for a deeper meaning, is often difficult when analyzing interview data. Words may be code for something else, such as the use of the word "distraction" by the parents, which applied to a range of distractions centred on boys and on sexuality. At times, the presence of code was less clear, for example, the use of "people" calls for more investigation. This indicates a direction for further research, using discourse analysis to identify the use and meaning of code words by parents, teachers and students, and to compare the three groups. Since the focus here is on the construction of femininity by those involved, a Foucauldian discourse analysis might be fruitful. This research, however, took a broader approach to constructions of femininity, and I point to code words only when they are very clearly being used in that way.

Confidence and Safety

After a talk on nutrition, makeup and how to comport oneself at RCJH (which aroused controversy among parents), a student commented that it was good because so many models are anorexic and they learned about that, and about a new group of heavier models being used. And she said she saw some of the overweight girls really perk up when that was said:

> But I think it's good because our society is changing too, as well as a lot of

> girls in our school who were very unconfident and now they're getting confident too, and you can tell, because they walk more proud and they don't slouch. (Kirsten)

At CGS The Hike was the big divide. Students who entered the program later in the year seldom began to be integrated into the school until they participated in the hike. At a student focus group of Grade 7s and 8s, I was told, for example, "the hike was fun--I hated the mountain [winter storm came in] but reaching the top was amazing and I felt very proud of myself." And "the hiking trip was really cool--really got us close." While another student commented "The hike? Yes it was *horrible*, but I made some good friends there." My favourite response was: "It was fun--afterwards. The only time I wanted to see a mountain again was in pictures."

Aisha (CGS) said that she:

> Hated it here at first--see now it was beneficial--I got Grade 10 in six months--constantly busy . . . it's been a challenge to pass . . . always thought I knew myself [but] I never knew myself.

Tracy was bubbling with enthusiam for CGS when I talked with her. She said she was getting leadership skills, and doing well academically. This is the:

> First time I've got a silver [for never getting less than 70%] so my parents are really proud of me, and I got a badge for hiking and snowshoeing, and went through volunteer program . . . in the snowshoe program . . . [she was having trouble keeping going], N took my hand and said I could do it. But I was still falling behind and then [the headmaster] came--he goes, "so you really want to do this?" and I go, "Yes" . . . when I made it I was so happy. . . . There's major support for each other here. Dad says I'm so much more mature this year. I don't daydream like I used to.

Patricia (CGS) commented that she had always preferred to play sports with the boys but they didn't want her. Now she was as good as they were, and "I can." She said she was more confident, more responsible and better able to handle deadlines than before. Aisha said that her relationships will be different "because I've changed . . . I'm confident in myself."

Cloistering and Distance

Safety held another aspect for several students, however, especially at CGS. Merry (CGS) said that she felt she had a chance to speak out, to be more involved in class, with no distractions. But:

> [When I]got out in public I felt self-conscious, I'm not sure how to act now--don't know what the expectations are. This is our family. The public is strange and we're not accustomed anymore.

For Merry, the school was now a safe area, and the public world an uncertain one, and she was unsure how to bridge the divide. She had a "feeling of distance from the 'outside'" Jan (CGS) said that she was learning good study habits and a sense of responsibility--that she now was careful about what she said and did. So Jan was feeling as if she had to guard herself more. She also felt isolated, saying she had "no sense of the outside world" because the students don't watch TV, they can only listen to radio. She was "lonesome away from people" and felt distant from her former friends. She was different "on the outside" but not on the inside she said, and that was distancing her. Carla said that "the real world is not very kind and I feel kind of unprepared for it."

A focus group of all students at CGS said that there was a sense in which they both felt safe, that the school was safer than being out on the streets of their home communities, but at the same time, it "also feels in prison! You can feel trapped and powerless." There is a sense of psychological as well as physical distancing which gives freedom and safety, but leaves the residential students especially feeling cut off from the rest of society, including their families and former friends. Being cut off may be good but can also leave them unsure how to behave, what is expected of them "outside," even afraid of it.

School and Class Size: "This is Like Family"

At an RCJH student focus group held in the fall of the second year, returning students complained about the larger size of the public school, which has almost doubled. That meant more teachers, and a less hands-on role for the Curriculum Coordinator. They miss the informality, and the feeling of knowing everyone. They said that the previous year there had been more of a feeling of community, that everyone knew each other. They felt like family.

As with RCJH students, CGS students compared themselves to a family, and talked about feeling free to speak up in class. In fact they said that they *had to* speak up in class because the teachers were able to notice who had not spoken. Students who had become lost in a larger school, or whose confidence was severely shaken after a time in high school, were able to recover and regain their self-esteem. The school's size added to a sense of safety but also of challenge for individual students.

Safety

Safety was a major issue in class size for the students. Many had experienced some form of silencing in their previous schools, whereas now they felt free to participate both in and outside of the classroom. Heather (RCJH) said:

> I don't know . . . I guess . . . there's almost some kind of friendship, like even if you don't like a person there's always a friendship between each other because like you look at all of us and all of us have, like, who are in this school for the first time and have experienced the changes that the school has gone through, so in one way you're kind of like, one almost family, and everyone here fights with family members, and I, like, and some people. I don't really like to call them my family [laughter] . . .because we all know each other.

Talk about the school doubling in size troubled Heather and her friend because they said that "We don't want our school to be overflooded with kids, because I think the relationship with teachers will change." As Rachel (CGS) had said, "Smaller classes are good because it's, the teachers can talk to you more and explain things."

The small class and school size led students to talk about their feelings of freedom and safety, of being able to be themselves, and of feeling as if their school was "family." There was a difference in relationships with teachers, in the curriculum and school activities, and in discipline, all of which were also made possible by the absence of boys. Although they talked about the bullying that remained, it seemed to have less power than in a coed school:

> Here you can be who you are, [people accept you as you are, and all you have to do is work hard]--but it feels better here.You feel like you're a better person and then you get higher marks . . . [you] have to have a bimbo act for guys. Here you straighten out--you can't do that here. (Student focus group notes, CGS)

Sibling Rivalry and Support

These notes also indicate a kind of love/hate relationship between students--sibling-like. Asked about friendships they tell me "they're very, very real." Aisha said: "it *is* like a family" and at RCJH, students also said that "in this school we're kind of like family." This was an analogy made most frequently by the students at CGS, for example, boarders said that having a roommate was like having a sister--something some of them had not had before. The family atmosphere is strong at CGS due in part to the boarders, and in part because of the small size of the school. The intensity of the activities also makes for informality and for an intimacy which is missing in the more structured public school. The long days and hard work, the outdoor program, the frantic rushes to be ready for craft sales, the choir trips, all add up to a kind of family experience. This experience includes sibling rivalry and support, a love/hate relationship with staff and other students, looking up to older girls who are achieving in some area, and gaining a sense of accomplishment within the community/family.

Relationships with Teachers and Classmates

CGS students said things like "Um, I guess it's more open. Like you get to talk about other things, I guess" (Carla). I asked Carla if she could tell me a little more about that. What kind of other things? "Um . . . I'm not sure," she said. "But it feels more open?" I asked. "Yeah. I don't know why." But later in the interview, Carla said, "Well, since it's all-girls, you don't really have to worry what you're saying in the halls, I guess, and. . . . " "You don't have to monitor what you're saying?" I asked. "Right," she said.

At RCJH, Tonia said:

> You can be way more free in this school, you can say anything you want. In the old school you said something you'd get teased for it, not just by the guys but by other girls too, and in this school we have the right to be free, you can't be teased about it and . . . it's great, it's coz like even during [classes] . . . it was so easy, you ask any question you wanted to and in the other school everybody was quiet, nobody would say anything.
>
> So you felt really silenced--you couldn't ask any questions or make comments in class? (Interviewer)

Tonia nods. Tonia also said that the teachers "explain it better here," that there are lots of different levels of ability in the classroom because people have come from lots of different schools, so what one knows another doesn't, "Coz there's a lot of different questions coz there's different people in the school" [i.e. coming from many different schools].

At CGS, Tracy said:

> In public school I had no trust in friendships, felt I had to hide myself. I tried to be different, dressed weird, felt like I had totally different personalities--I still have trouble with that. But school [here] is like family--I feel bad I'm not as close to my family--they're still getting used to me [because I'm away from them so much, and I've changed].

I heard a great deal about teachers in their previous schools who didn't care or who picked on a student. And also about "skaters who would tell a teacher where to go and how to get there," (students' focus group notes, CGS) whereas in this school "you wouldn't dare" to do that. During this focus group I also heard about past teachers telling girls that they "couldn't do" math, whereas at CGS students said they were "ragged on" for saying "I can't" do anything. "Here you have to work for your marks," they said. This was a view shared by parents. Small class size means that students cannot "hide" or evade teachers, but it also means that their friendships are more intense, and generally supportive. They get to know each other much better, especially in the private school among the residential students.

Julie (CGS) commented that people are more tolerant, because they have no choice, they have to get along. She said that as a result of this difference in relationships, she has more motivation, her marks are a lot higher and she is doing assignments. "It's more of a learning environment--you can ask questions that are beyond work being done and they will answer them." Julie said that she has got used to having roommates, and likes that because it's "nice you know, you have a nightmare and you wake up and look around and there's two other people here . . . I'm OK."

With smaller classes comes greater freedom and safety, but also a greater challenge, because you cannot escape observation. There is nowhere to hide in a small classroom or a small school. But that also means greater informality and friendliness, with one-on-one help from teachers. Discipline, in such a setting, is much less of an issue, especially among girls. As one said, "It's the boys who are the misbehavers." So at RCJH the students could say "our teachers aren't really high on discipline," probably because they did not need to be.

Tracy said she would like her sister to come to CGS also. She wanted her to experience the challenges:

> Trying to make that last mile . . . and having races *every* Saturday. Getting up in the morning is hard. Trying to stay me--everything I want to be. I'm creative, like to make things, I'm getting smart, will go to university. . . . I have so many choices now . . . I'm not going to be a little housemother [and won't have a child until she's ready].

The reader might notice the equation of "getting smart" with not being a "little housemother." A few students at each school made remarks such as this, suggesting that either they thought that way before entering the schools, or the goals of their parents and the schools were becoming integrated into their own desires. Given the general initial reluctance to go to a girls' school, the latter view seems more likely.

Uniform

Small size means less obvious discipline, but the uniform is an expression of school authority, for which the rules were clearer and more strictly enforced in the private school. I was interested to know how students reacted to this authority as symbolized by the uniform.

Students at RCJH said that many of their friends thought the school was private or elitist because of the uniform, and that they were hassled on public transport, for example, and called "snobs" or "lezzies." A uniform indicates private school to friends and they reject you, said a student, and then "I get mad" (Erica, RCJH):

> So I wear this uniform, like, all day because I don't have time to go home and change. So most people look at it, "Oh, she goes to a private school right? But I mean, I get mad because I do not go to a private school, but I guess people look at me differently.

Just occasionally a student would indicate that the uniform did make her feel that her school was "better." Others thought the uniform was a leveller among its wearers:

> Well, I appreciate it. I really like it. I don't know, it makes everybody equal. Like if someone has I don't know, like the nicest clothes, they can't put it over you. (Rachel, CGS)

> At the beginning of the year I didn't like it, I was embarrassed to go on the bus with it, but again because of my confidence, I'm so used to it by now, like when I'm walking around, people are staring at me, I'm like "What are you staring at me for?" And then I remember, oh yeah, I've got my uniform on, oh well, let them think what they want. I don't mind wearing it, it's more comfortable than sitting in a chair with a pair of jeans on all day, way comfortable, as long as you're wearing shorts underneath. It looks good if you're wearing it properly . . . well, some people come to school with their shirts untucked and the teachers tell them to tuck it in. That's

> not that bad but then after that class they untuck it, and then the next teacher tells them to tuck it in, and then after that class they untuck it, so . . . (Tonia, RCJH)
>
> So some students are really resistant? (Interviewer)
>
> Yeah.

I asked Melinda (RCJH) about her reactions to the uniform.

> Not really much. It wasn't important to me . . . [now] "it's kind of boring [laughs] . . . it's kind of getting annoying, but it's kind of fun because you don't have to decide what you're going to wear, and what's clean and what's not. Like you still have to, just, like clean stuff and stuff, but don't worry about getting dressed in the morning anymore.
>
> It was important to you before? (Interviewer)
>
> Not really . . . [it's easier with a uniform]. It's not as, like people would make fun of your clothes and stuff . . . [if they were] kind of different I guess, than others, like I might not be in . . . the same clothes as somebody else and . . . I don't know, I had one incident where my friends didn't like my clothes but . . . so then going to uniforms wasn't as bad for me I guess. I like the pants and the shorts . . . the kilt's not bad, but, it's kind of in style I guess. . . . I would like to have lots of options that you could pick and choose from.
>
> Some students talk about being embarrassed by the uniform? (Interviewer)
>
> I think its kind of cool, you know. . . . Sometimes they notice like, that you have a uniform, and they say "Oh you wear a uniform? You're from that all-girls' school?" And sometimes it's not that good to have . . . lots of boys that used to be in my class at our school, [say] "oh yeah, you're going to be a lesbian," but they say it to bug you though.

At CGS Rachel said:

> I like it. It makes it for me . . . you don't have to think about getting up in the morning and, and, it doesn't create competition because everybody's the same, and you know, you're wearing the exact same colours, I mean it doesn't matter if you have Guess dress pants or something, it doesn't matter because you're all looking the same. The quality is more, I think, what the school's trying to do is put the quality more to the focus of the mind, rather than to what your outward appearance is. . . . They try to put you on an equal level . . . so that nobody has to form cliques.
>
> The uniform, Rachel argues, is one reason students get along so well,

because it makes them equals. But while many students said it was easier getting dressed, and made the students more equal, others were much less in favour, or at least wanted some modifications. At an RCJH focus group of Grade 7 students, there was considerable dissatisfaction:

> When RCJH first started no one had the uniform and people weren't judged on what they were wearing.
>
> Parents say they want the students to dress as if they were going to work . . . [there's a] certain number of parents who have to have it their own way, and think they know it all because they went to, like, a uniformed school, and so they know what should be done, and what shouldn't be done, and they're saying, well the girls should be dressed as if they're going to the work office or the workplace.
>
> And for instance we wanted to wear our track suits because we'd just purchased these brand new track suits and so students said track suits, they'd like to wear their track suits as a part of their uniform, not just the gym uniform. The parents couldn't have that because they think we'd look too sloppy or it wouldn't just be proper and I personally think that's not very right because I think that it should be the students' opinion just as much as, the students' opinion should be valued just as much as the parents', because it's not the parents that have to wear the uniform, but they don't think that way, and so it's not. . . . I almost think that the parents, a lot of them are very old fashioned, and so . . .

Many students expressed this strong hostility to the parents' uniform committee, believing that they were the ones who were "forcing" the uniform on the school. Others said the uniform was "OK" but they would prefer to wear their own clothes, and that in an all-girls' school there wasn't the same pressure to compete for attention so it wasn't as important to wear a uniform:

> [In a coed school] I would make sure I'm wearing nice clothes. [Here you have no choice] but that choice wouldn't be as important in an all-girls' school as it is in a coed. (Sandra, RCJH)

Later this student said she liked having variety in her wardrobe, and showing off a new purchase to friends, but also said that if there were boys in the school she would get more dressed up than she would with only girls. "My mum wanted to look nice in junior high because where else are you going to see them

[boys]"? This comment in particular appears to me to refer to not just being seen by boys, but attracting them. Other students rejected what they saw as everyone being made to look the same. At a Grade 7 group of three friends, the students argued that:

> It's the same as a normal junior high except for the fact it has no boys, and uniforms and it's just, they're trying to make you . . . the same. (Lana)
>
> The same here. This year it's the shoes, same socks--next year maybe it'll be the same hairstyle [said with scorn] I mean it's like they're trying for Barbies like Lana says. (Elsie)
>
> Like we could still learn the same without boys and have the same clothes, coz even at the beginning of the year [before uniforms arrived] there was no competition over clothes. (Lana)
>
> Having a uniform is like having a jail . . . well it's like a private school . . . you can't really express yourself. My mum told me a uniform is supposed to sort of make you proud of your school, or blah, blah, blah, well I think we can be proud of our school in other ways, you know . . . without having the uniform all the time. (Lenore)

The size of the school makes it possible for students to get more attention from teachers, to be closer to each other, to feel like a family. But they are not in agreement over the imposition of a uniform. The discipline imposed by a uniform was appreciated, not for any intrinsic value in having a uniform, but mainly for the ease of getting dressed in the morning, and for comfort. The very independence and confidence which the schools wish to instill can in fact lead to outspoken criticism of school rules, especially about uniforms. Occasionally I heard about other rules also, such as the "no phoning home during the week" rule at CGS, and general complaints about the strictness of regulations there, but it was the uniform which attracted most criticism at RCJH.

Peer Culture

What appears to be unchanged in the public school is the peer culture. Students at RCJH especially said there was still competition based on looks--where you bought your generalized items of uniform (shoes, for example), how you wore your uniform, where your hair was cut, whether you were slim and so on. But the leaders (who set the norms) are girls, not boys. Appearance is still one of the main criteria in the pecking order, coupled with wealth--the ability to own material things. Social skills also matter, plus what Heather described scornfully as "weird things like being able to play "O Canada" on the telephone or something." "If you can't be a good snob you're not going to survive" said Elsie.

When I first began this study, I expected to hear about the bad behaviour of boys. What surprised me was an undercurrent of observations about similar behaviour from girls. In the popularity rating, personality seemed to be unimportant. It was not the well-liked girls who were necessarily "popular," although some of the popular girls were described as nice--sometimes with an air of surprise, as at something not expected. The major group of popular girls were those who had material wealth and were "good looking." They also were often academically good, or good in sports. They were alternately described as the group everyone wanted to be in, and as mean, cruel, or snobs.

> Sometimes when people get into the popular group they dump you . . . [there is a] lot of wealthy people in that group and they're not all snobs but most are . . . a lot of people would like to be in that group, then they'd be popular too--they don't see through them. They all do the same thing--dress, activities. (Lana, RCJH)

"Popular" in this parlance does not mean "someone liked by everyone." Rather it means a kind of Hollywood stardom, someone *who is a model of success, or looks successful.* But the obverse, those who are not popular, is often referred to as being a *rebel,* implying that the successful model was also conformist. This was a conformity to a popular culture image of the successful person, however, rather than a conformity to school or family values. A mother described a daughter who was deliberately choosing to look and act the opposite of those in the popular group, and several students spoke of themselves as rebels, and by the same token, not popular. Unpopular girls do not, or perhaps cannot, conform to the peer group norms, and are therefore "unsuccessful," and "nobodies" or people who do not belong. They have been "outed" just as much as in the coeducational schools unpopular girls were outed:

> I've been known among the popular girls as "nice," you know, not annoying or blah, blah, blah, right? (Lenora)
>
> And I'm classified as annoying! (Elsie)
>
> Yeah.
>
> There's a girl in our class, who's a little bit, pudgy?, and they all treat her, really//Like she's dirt//Yeah. (All talking together)
>
> Are looks the criteria for what makes you popular? (Interviewer)
>
> Looks and who you made friends with in earlier years. (Grade 7 group of three friends)
>
> There's this girl in our class, and um, everybody's very afraid . . . and she thinks like she's pretty . . . and she's like, you know, the miss walking like Cindy Crawford, that's what she thinks of herself as, and nobody wants to stick up towards, like stick up for themselves, and she'll put you down and she'll think like she's the world, and I worked on a project with her once, and she did nothing and I did everything, so I went to the teacher and told her this, and she [student] got really mad at me, and everybody's like, well, yeah, you were one of the first people who ever stuck up for yourself towards her. (Heather, RCJH)
>
> Well in my head I'm looking at the kids who have more friends and the kids who don't and I sort of find that that's true, like, I do think that the kids who might not . . . who're larger in size, or incapable of doing some things, are really, a bit, not as popular, not as popular as other girls . . . girls can be mean with their mouths, and boys might be more aggressive, but girls use their mouth, just as dangerous as boys with their fists. (Erica, RCJH)

Kirsten confirmed this when she said:

> Well, I mean, name calling still is in this school but not, um, harassment like from boys and stuff, in the hallways and stuff, even though it still happens sometimes.

Amy told me that sometimes when a student was popular, she would try to get other students to "not like" an unpopular student--a form of "outing." "Sometimes that happens--really mean girls do that to people." She said that a popular group would be a group that hung out together, such as the "RSGs." When I asked her about the RSGs she told me they were the "Riverside Girls," a group who had been in elementary school together and who had stayed together at RCJH. Several of them were the daughters of parents who had worked to start up the school, and it sounded as if they were using that as a kind of leverage for a power base. I asked her about this group, of which she appeared to be a member.

> Yeah, but we really don't notice it. I wouldn't name us Riverside Girls because we have lots of new friends and some of us have split up, and like, lots of friends have gone with other people, so it doesn't bother me. . . . There are some girls who are better at some things than others, but . . .
>
> You don't see them being treated differently by other girls? (Interviewer)
>
> Sometimes . . . by some girls.
>
> Are we talking about mean girls again? (Interviewer)
>
> Yeah. [laughs]
>
> So there are some girls making these kinds of judgements and some are not? (Interviewer)
>
> Yeah . . . some who do . . . don't really mind if there are other people around the group but there are some that . . . [stops].
>
> And the girls who are doing that--lets call them the mean girls--they may be popular girls as well? (Interviewer)
>
> Yeah.
>
> So meanness doesn't necessarily mean they are not popular? (Interviewer)
>
> Sometimes it does, like, but like some girls don't really like the mean . . . because they're too mean to people--even mean to their friends, so . . .

Or as Lenore, Elsie and Lana (nonmembers of the RSGs) put it:

> They're some girls in our class that . . . they all hang around together and they think they're so great because they're all people who know each other,

> they can afford these types of clothes and all this kind of junk, and like, they treat you like you're nothing.

Peer culture appeared to change in an all-girls' context, but less so at the public school. Bullying continued, and the criteria for popularity had the same basis. Boys were absent, but the longer term goal of being attractive to the opposite sex appeared to be still present. I often wondered about the girls with a same-sex sexual orientation. In this kind of peer culture, they were doubly excluded. Not only were boys of no interest, but to be a lesbian was to confirm the insults of students from coeducational schools, likely to be interpreted as a kind of treason. Not surprisingly, I heard no intimations of being a lesbian at the public school, and only two students talked about it at the private school, and then in a very circuitous fashion, such as saying "she was interested in me in a way that made me uncomfortable."

At CGS the peer culture was very different from that of a public school. Some students said there was definitely a hierarchy among the students, and some bullying. Interestingly, they also identified two groups--the conformers and the rebels. But here, while the rebels gained some admiration, and the conformers were popular, the conformity was to the school's philosophy and goals, rather than to a Hollywood model of success. Popularity was based more on achievement and leadership skills, with the most supportive, generous and friendly girls being the popular ones. While RCJH rebels were those resisting the norms of the popular group, rebels at CGS were those who refused to conform to the formal and informal rules of the school, sometimes also challenging the authority of staff, and generally resisting being at the school. They gained attention, and some respect, but were not seen as popular. The isolation of the school, its size, and its commitment to, and demands of, the students, seems to draw them in in a way which is not available to the public school.

> There's a sort of hierarchy, because you've got the juniors and you've got the seniors . . . but the Grade 12s we have, it's kind of funny . . . well, excuse me, I'm a Grade 12, so, you know, you gotta listen to me, and you

> know . . . some days that happens, like on the power trip days, and other days they're just like everybody else, so . . .
>
> There are girls who tend to turn people off? (Interviewer)
>
> Yeah, they find, I find that people who think they're more opinionated, they know who's best, or what's best or anything like that tend to be turned off, um . . . people like that really turn each other off. And there are a couple in the school that do that, but, we [laughs], they sort of mellow out after a while [once they understand there are no cliques]. (Merry, CGS)

Feminism

Having asked parents about their views on feminism, I wanted to know to what extent their daughters agreed with their views. I also wondered if the Women's Studies component at both schools would change their thinking about feminists, since I knew both schools included in the curriculum information on, for example, the suffragists. An interesting comment came from a student who said "we have to be careful because we are in an all-girls' school," not to seem to be criticizing boys or men because they do help with children:

> Like, I think it's great to, like make sure that women have equal rights and everything . . . but I'm saying there's a few men out there who, who are the kind of critical people to women, and lots of times those few men have made the whole, all the men, be like that, and they don't recognize that only a few men, like few men are like this and . . . like every male I know isn't like that, and I've yet to meet one, so . . . (Erica, RCJH)

But this was said by a student who had told me about being "outed" by a faction of boys in her previous school. Heather, who had also experienced rejection for being supposedly overweight, said:

> And so what I feel is that they have to be careful because because we are in an all-girls' school, and they might say things, criticize boys, like, we had a class discussion in [socials] this year, and they were talking about when, who, when your parents, when you're born, who is looking after you, and they were almost implying that the woman is and the man's not, and I really have a problem with that because I know my dad looked after me just as much as my mum did.

An RCJH student group, as stated earlier, argued that they should keep away from feminism in an all-girls' school, because it could label them as second best. "We're just the same as boys, and may the best *man* win," they said. As stated in chapter 5, I would argue that first, they did not want to offend the men who would be part of their lives later, and second, they equated success with maleness, with being as good as a man.

Several times, both with students and parents, I was told that "my brother" or "my father" or "my husband" is different--he's not like those boys (men) who are mean, he helps with housework, or he is gentle, or respectful. There were, apparently, many exceptions among the menfolk of those involved in all-girls' schools (see above). I sensed a real anxiety about not "male bashing." "We don't hate boys we just want to get on with our work." This segregation was a temporary measure and soon they would all be back together again. This may account for the discomfort I heard expressed around feminism, since while feminism affirms the girls' right to do well in school and to be independent, it is also perceived as "male bashing." This becomes entangled with being lesbian, due to the association of lesbians with masculine women who hate men, a stereotype that is also applied to feminists. The two stereotypes are not unconnected, as many feminist writers such as Lorber (1994) have pointed out. Feminists are equated with lesbians, and both challenge male dominance.

These connections become clearer in the girls' voices when expressed as fears of lesbians, and of being called a lesbian. Maria (CGS) would "rather live at home. Girls get on my nerves and my roommate *liked* me." Asked for their views on feminism, students said that it was sexist if it was putting guys down, but if it was saying women are different then it isn't. At CGS, they said, we have respect for women, whereas in public school, if you respected women you were considered a lesbian (not a good thing). Some of their friends considered them lesbian just because they were at the school. But they also said that at CGS they felt free to tease each other, and to say "I love you" and it was taken in fun--it wasn't taken personally. Apparently, women being together was perceived by outsiders, but not by the students themselves, as lesbian and feminist. "I went to sell chocolates and I told them I was in an all-girls' school, or Kate did, and she said 'all girls that go there are eventually going to turn out to be lezzies'" (Lana, RCJH), but students themselves often equated "lesbian" with "feminist."

I frequently wondered about this. It appears to be not acceptable for women to isolate themselves from or to seem to reject men. Further, any problems encountered with men require an individual, not a group or institutional response. Consequently, one does not want to be a feminist, since feminists hate men. My interview notes from students at CGS record comments such as:

> Feminists are going too far because they tell men they are wrong, even when they're changing.
>
> Feminists scare men and they get defensive. Men get defensive anyway--get a group of women together and they get scared.
>
> We're treating men the same and now treating women like men, and if you're too much of the guy you're a bitch and of you're too much of the fem then you're a pussy--you've got to be in the middle.
>
> The guys don't want to change. We have to keep our old role and take on the new one.

School "gives us permission to negotiate new roles." Students do not want to be "added in." What they say they want is to negotiate new roles--they think that it is individual change that is needed. For example, Tracy (CGS) said:

> I have no need to be [a feminist]. I don't need to fight people for my rights--I know I have them--if they're taken away from me--then I'll become a feminist. . . . I think every single person is a feminist in a way--want their rights. There's not really a definition for being a woman or a man--just that women have children

Patricia (CGS) argued:

> No difference between men and women. Some feminists are quite conceited and think that men are dirt--women should have same rights as men. I know I can achieve things. I don't need to fight for equality because I know I'm equal regardless of what men think.

> I think I'll probably be more, easier to deal with and more confident in my self when I leave RCJH because of what they taught me and about feminism or whatever--more confident in myself so it won't bother me so much and I won't worry as much when I go to another school. I am a feminist. We should be treated equal. (Tonia, RCJH)

> Strong women can do anything. They are equal to men. I believe women should have equal rights--but I'm not a feminist. (Aisha, CGS)

At a CGS group of Grade 8s and 9s, students said they thought that women have to prove they are not weak, but that they really disliked the "bitch-aggressive" label that attaches to being strong, and the accusations of being a lesbian because they were in an all-girls' boarding school. It's safer in a boarding school, they said-- no distractions. Jan commented:

> I don't know; it's there, you can't deny it, but I don't agree with taking it to extremes. I wouldn't be aggressive [as in the cartoon--see below]. An all-girls school makes you more confident because there's no boys putting you down, but I don't think that we're that assertive. We're more confident, we don't say "I can't"--after all, not many people have walked up a mountain-but to shove it in someone's face, that's not OK. (Jan, CGS)

Talk about feminism often overlapped with comments about being a woman such as this one from Verna at CGS:

> I'm more open now, not so afraid, I have more confidence. I was always friends with boys, because I have all brothers at home. I wanted to have girl friends but I was not interested in clothes and makeup. I used to play soccer with my brothers. No one taught me to do girls things, so I went on enjoying boys as friends. Being here with all girls is very different. I found sharing a room difficult.

Verna commented that when girls fight, the conflict seems to linger on and hurt more. Girls are meaner to each other, she said. Friendships have a different quality here. Vera also said that she doesn't want to be too feminine--she doesn't like it. However, while she thinks men and women are equal she also sees them as different in some things.

Cartoon

At student focus groups in the fall of 1996 I passed around a cartoon which depicted a male employer interviewing a woman who was behaving in an aggressive manner (she challenges him to an elbow wrestle!). He comments that she must have been to an all-girls' school. (For a copy of this cartoon, please refer to Appendix E). The students were asked their reactions. These included (RCJH focus group):

> I don't think that's how I'll be like after I'm finished college but I think that's stereotyping of how people think we'll turn out.
>
> I want people to have equal rights but I don't want to be a feminist.
>
> We wouldn't follow what men do. Just be ourselves [general agreement].
>
> We're not taught to be that--just be confident and respect others but not hate anyone else.
>
> Do you see feminists as hating men? (Interviewer)
>
> I think there's like feminists and extreme feminists and I think they're male bashing.

After a pause another student asked:

> But isn't the definition of feminism "equal rights"?

No one answered that. Another member of the group said:

> We're all so different, from different backgrounds. Opinions come from our parents, so we have different perceptions.
>
> Different perceptions of feminism? (Interviewer)
>
> Yeah, some of the girls say they hate men.

"Maybe having a brother makes you feel different than someone who is never around men," suggested a student who had one. Another comments that although she is good at cooking and sewing she doesn't like to be told she'll make a good mother--she doesn't want to be slotted into that role. When I showed a focus group of CGS students the cartoon, they said:

> I love that.
>
> It shows how women *should* be acting.
>
> She should go girl--like we have rights too you know.
>
> But also:
>
> I wouldn't be that aggressive.
>
> Not all guys are like that
>
> I don't want to sink to their [guys'] level

Aisha (CGS) said:

> Yeah, that's us. We're equal to men--we compare to [private boys' school] like we went further in some things we do--we do as much as they do--they're a bit more laid back--it's a heady feeling, kind of funny--it's almost like a stereotype: that women in education are more confident and take over the workplace.
>
> I don't see myself as that conceited--but I would be competent--this education is more focused and disciplined. . . . I suppose it could be threatening to some. (Patricia, CGS)

Carla (CGS):

> Oh yeah I don't mind being seen as equal to a guy. But I wouldn't be a feminist. I think guys and girls can do whatever they want. I just play it by ear. It's bad if a guy thinks he's better than a girl, but I don't want to be aggressive.

Some students in a Grade 7 and 8 group (RCJH) saw women as always working under men, always being treated as second class, and they thought that had to end. "We're all equal," they said, and one added, "I would love to be, like, that self-confident." "Yeah," said another, "but I wouldn't be that aggressive, like, let's go buddy, right now, like . . . " "Would you initiate a date?" I asked. Not in person, she said, I wrote a letter once. The worst thing is when they ask and you don't want to go. . . . She did not like "hurting them." The group then got into a big debate about whether girls and boys were different in expressing their feelings. Some said they were, while others called that idea sexist and said they knew guys they could "lean on" and who could express their feelings.

Women's Studies

When I asked students what they thought about the element of women's studies introduced into both schools' curricula, many did not know it was there. If I said that they would hear as much about women as about men in history, science, literature and other subjects, some would recognize what I was talking about. For example at RCJH:

> If we get a worksheet done for Mrs. B, she would change the "he" to a "she," or like for . . . if we had to do anything on a famous person, it had to be a famous woman. . . . Like we do do men to, we don't absolutely exclude them, but we do mainly women, just to get a feel for what they went through in their history, what they're going through now, and they're still not being treated the best, but we're getting better, because many people, many women are standing up for their rights. (Tonia, RCJH)
>
> Like for instance in my science class we don't [do anything on women], I think maybe in my social class we have maybe, we've just like, we were going to cover the women's roles in ancient Japan . . . but we have yet to do something that I think they can put into their own category as women's studies, they've yet to do so much that they can say women's studies.
>
> You are thinking of women's studies as what? (Interviewer)
>
> Like, if they really did talk about women and how they contributed and stuff like that. They might have like, said it a couple of times but it's not come with class discussion or anything, kind of . . . what they have done sometimes is they have brought in like, successful women who have been successful in their careers . . . and I think that's really helped. (Leanne, RCJH)

Women's studies was definitely not seen as central to the curriculum of either school. Rather it was an odd addition that was kind of interesting, and perhaps occasionally useful.

Career and Family

Since much recent research has focused on the expectations of high school and college students in regard to career and family (Lucey, Walkerdine, & Melody, 1997; McLaren 1996; Watson 1996), I asked these students about their future plans. Given that they were in an all-girls' school designed to encourage them to have a career, or at least to priorize occupation over marriage for their first few years of adulthood, I wondered how the girls themselves perceived their options. I found a similar range of responses to that found by McLaren (1996) in British Columbia. Some students expressed some ambiguity, some priorized family, and were less than enthusiastic about a career, while others wanted a career and no family.

The daughter of parents who had said that they wanted her not to priorize marriage, later told me that she "would like to meet someone while I'm young, who is the same age--someone I've grown up with." She thought it would be easier to understand each other. This is, in fact, how her parents met. She said that she would continue working--but her family would come first--if she had a child, she *might* cut back on work, but "I suppose I would stay home." Then, after a pause, she said: "I think I'll just be myself--I don't care what others say." As a member of a group of students interviewed earlier, she had told me that people said she would make a good mother because she liked to cook and sew, but that she didn't want to be told that--she did not want to be slotted into that role. Many students reflected this ambiguity--talking about their dreams of romance, while also planning a career.

A group of Grade 7s at RCJH told me that some of their teachers had boyfriends, and they liked to tease them. I asked, "Are they doing what you look forward to be doing at their age?" They replied:

> I hope I'm not single at that age but, like, there's a couple of things that, but . . . I hope I'm not single at that age.
>
> They're not our idols but it's, it's interesting.

I asked "you'd like to be married?"

> Well, I don't want to be, I don't want to be, well I might be married but I don't want to be like, living alone in a little apartment and just teaching.

These students said they would like marriage and children one day, when they were financially secure, but they also would like to be "young enough to enjoy them [children]." Their reactions to a question about caring for children while working ranged from use of daycare, or hiring a nanny, to a husband willing to stay home part of the time, and "I'm going to be teacher because then it'll be easier to have kids."

Tonia (RCJH) said that she was thinking about a couple of different careers, and wants to go to univerity or college right after finishing high school. She thought she might get married, but she was not sure. However:

> If I do, I want a supportive husband . . . somebody who *does* clean and does "women's work" too--or what's considered woman work, which I think is not quite right, but anyway, and somebody who supports everything I do.
>
> Oh my! I think I'd like to have a family. I know a lot of the girls disagree with me in that kind of respect. I'd like to have a family, I'd like to be married, I'd like to have kids, um, I want to do more hobby things. I don't actually want to have a job, because for me, its just not something I enjoy, I mean, for me, something that I enjoy is I like to babysit kids, so I mean I'd like to be a mother, I'd like to stay there. I love to draw, I would give piano lessons, um, I could do things like that . . . people have actually offered to buy my drawings . . . and so . . . I mean if I had to go out and work I really would, I'd find a job and get some money and I'd help, you know, support the family. (Merry, CGS)

Media

At RCJH the students were tired of the media "circus" which surrounded the opening of the school, and which occasionally returned during their first two years of operation. The parents had courted this attention for the publicity it gave to the school, but their daughters were tired of being interviewed: Heather commented:

> At the end of the year I'm sure we'll get so much press at our school asking how did this year go? And that, they'll want us to say that it was all perfect and fine. I've been interviewed by CBC, the *River City Journal* . . . and I've been interviewed by many, many people, and . . . saying what do you think about the school, and can't say anything

> bad about it, so you're like, oh, it's OK, but . . . sometimes I wish that they could just, like, leave me alone. . . . I feel almost like we're like rats in a cage and we're being watched and examined by every single person, and you feel like you do something wrong, it's like . . . it's all a big experiment . . . but I hate it when the media comes, they're always focusing on boys, like it's never on academics, it's always boys, and boys aren't the biggest thing in the world, and it's like . . . ?

Erica interrupted:

> Don't tell them [boys] that! [laughter]
>
> Well, like, yeah, we're here for the education. If you want to interview us come and interview us about our education.

These two students also said that they had been interviewed one time and had said all positive things about their school, but when the interview came out it focused on students from other schools who called them lezzies:

> We're just regular girls in . . . school, as in a coed school, [only] we're going to an all-girls school and we're trying to focus on our academics rather than boyfriends or you know, kiss, kiss or like that.

Discussion

Although almost all the students I interviewed had resisted going to a girls' school initially, they mainly had good feelings about being in an all-girls' school at the time of the interviews. At the public school they were most likely to grumble about the uniform, and at the private school about their isolation. But even here, their feelings were ambiguous.

> Here you can just be who you want to be and people like you for who you are . . . but unfortunately you still don't get to wear what you want to wear [laughter]. There's no individuality in this school--can't wear makeup, jewellry, own clothes. (CGS focus group, everyone talking at once!)
>
> So what's CGS going to give you? (Interviewer)
>
> My life back//An education//I want to stay//Mum wants me to stay//Will do better//Public school would be so easy after this.
>
> Do you love to hate this school? (Interviewer)

> YEAH! We have nothing else to complain about! We don't have a life!

And more thoughtfully:

> It feels better here. Feels like you are a better person and you get better marks. . . . But it's hard not to be at home when family members have a birthday or something. I feel separated from my former life.

RCJH students are also much happier in their new school. However, having told me about the cruelty of many of their previous peer groups, which they also said were headed by the boys, students from both schools wanted to be sure that I understood they did not hate boys. They just needed some peace and quiet, in a smaller classroom, to get on with their work, and to regain their self-confidence. Although they acknowledged the meanness of some of the "popular" girls in the public school, students seemed to regard this as normal behaviour, and something that you had to live with. When Heather stuck up for herself, she was much admired. The key to this might be in the family feeling generated in a smaller school. Sibling quarrels are far easier to manage than the full scale popularity wars which appear to be the norm for a larger and coeducational setting.

In both settings, discipline is recognized and accepted as legitimate, although it is also the subject of many complaints. I was constantly reminded of Foucault's theory of power. These students knew that they were being made to internalize messages about hard work and achievement, for example, and they accepted these definitions of what was good for them, even while they would really rather be "having fun." For CGS girls discipline was experienced in the challenges of The Hike, the snowshoeing and other outdoor activities, and in the school work. For RCJH it appears to be mostly vested in the uniform. But with some exceptions, the students I interviewed are not really rebellious (and it must be acknowledged that they may not be representative of the public school as a whole. In the private school I talked to all students.) They are at the school to improve their grades. Discipline may be an irritant, but it is not there to be resisted beyond untucking one's shirt. And despite the discipline "you can be more free in this school." Students felt a great sense of relief over the new climate in which they found themselves, one in which they were largely able to be themselves, to "say anything you want," and to have a different, and more friendly and supportive relationship with the teachers. Thus their freedom included a choice to be obedient, a choice which one might expect to be reinforced by the all-girls' setting.

Although most of the students spoke of their increased confidence, expected improvement in grades, and future dreams, relatively few supported feminism. Most had absorbed the popular view of feminists as man-hating, and assumed that view to be correct. As well, they clearly did not want to be associated with any kind of male-bashing. It was not the boys' fault that they were here. They liked boys. Many said that they had boys as friends. At the public school they wanted everyone to understand that they were not feminist, not lesbians, and not snobs, just girls who wanted to do well in school and found a larger, coeducational classroom distracting. At the private school the students often acknowledged that they had been having personal or academic problems (and often both) at their previous school, and CGS was going to help them achieve their goals. I did not ask all of the students about their future careers, and of those I did ask, many did not know what they wanted to do. However, among those who had a dream of a particular career, I was struck by the narrow range within which their choices fell. Most of them wanted to be a marine biologist, a teacher, a psychologist or an actor. Of these, the first three might be considered traditionally female occupations, and acting might be connected to the star quality of popularity markers in the school. In other words, these students appear not to be, at least at this stage in their school career, looking at nontraditional work.

The students rejected the popular opinions of their girls' schools which were voiced by outsiders and in the press and series of letters published in the *River City News* throughout the year that RCJH opened). They had framed themselves as students who wanted to do well in school, and who were in a school which would help them do that. The majority of the students loved the safe, family-like atmosphere in which they found themselves. If parents are more protective of their daughters, the daughters certainly reciprocate on the idea of safety, but express it as freedom from the dominance and harassment of the boys, and as "peacefulness." If parents want them to be successful, they also confirm that goal, and many commented on their greater confidence in the girls' school. Further, they reflect the views of the parents on feminism, with many rejecting it, and some cautiously or otherwise, accepting or supporting it. As with the parents, however, the students believe that the gender proofing they are to receive will enable them to get along with boys on an equal footing, and to take care of themselves when they move on from the school. They appear to be unaware of the structural inequalities they will encounter, in spite of the women's studies incorporated into their curriculum.

CHAPTER 8

SEGREGATION AND GENDER PROOFING

> In our culture the reproductive dichotomy is assumed to be the absolute basis of gender and sexuality in everyday life. . . . For many people the notion of natural sex difference forms a limit beyond which thought cannot go (Connell 1987:66).

The interviews with school staff, parents and students furnished complex and rich data on how each participant had reached a decision to support a particular girls' school. Running through those conversations are several themes which I argue point to an underlying but unquestioned assumption. It is identified by Connell, in the quotation above, as the reproductive dichotomy. In this discussion, however, I argue that the stakes are much higher than an assumption of natural differences.

Two Girls' Schools

The two schools in this study were set up for girls. In other words, they were organized around the concept of gender and specifically to segregate girls from boys during a particular time in their lives. Schools, parents and students placed a high priority on improving school performance and increasing the self-confidence of the students, but they did not want the segregation to be permanent and assumed that the girls would eventually reenter the social world constituted by "normal" heterosexual relationships. Both school staff and parents accepted the notion that women and men are different, and that gendered behaviour correlates with, and to some extent is caused by, biological sex.

The two schools were founded in different ways and from different philosophical stances. Consequently I expected to find differences in how those involved in them were thinking about femininity. One of the early surprises was to find that parents of students in the private Christian school were not only not necessarily Christian, but were more likely to be concerned about the Christian element than to have chosen the school because of it. They chose the school because it was private which they interpreted in terms of small classes and greater discipline.

The fact that it was segregated was a bonus which they appreciated and thought important, but which had not been a primary consideration. This contrasts with the public school parents who often also expressed the hope that the program would remain small, with smaller class sizes than are general in the public school system. However, they emphasized discipline more in terms of believing that in a smaller class and with no boys to distract, girls would become self-disciplined. It was the all-girls program which attracted them. For both sets of parents the goal was improved attitudes to and performance of school work.

The private school arose out of a Christian ecumenical community, and the vision of one man, its headmaster. That vision, and the community which was translating it into practice, inevitably had a different impact on the school's structure and organization than in the public school. At the public school the initiative had come from a group of parents, and the program was put into practice by a separate group of teachers and administrators, causing problems in its interpretation and delivery which led to conflict made worse as new groups of parents became involved. The private school was fraught with tensions largely caused by insecure and inadequate access to financial and other resources such as staffing. At the public school tensions were generated by conflicts over what the program should be and include. As I argue in my discussion of the two schools, one had a clear vision and lack of structure while the other had a fragmented vision and bureaucratic structure.

The parents, however, were less caught up in the vision of the private school, and more focused on class size and academic performance. At the public school they were struggling for a vision to which they could all agree, and hoping for smaller class sizes. The focus was different, but the desires for the girls were the same. They wanted them to do well in school, go on to further training, get a good job or begin a career, and be financially and occupationally secure before ever considering marriage and a family. They all agreed that segregating girls was a good way to reduce the distraction offered by the presence of boys. They were not opposed to their daughters being interested in the opposite sex. They simply wanted it to be delayed until the girls were older, more mature, and established.

The Notion of Natural Sex Difference

The natural way of things in society is seen by participants as resting on this difference, which leads to a division of labour around mating and reproduction. Males were seen as naturally aggressive, and females as naturally supportive and caring, making mothers the better parent to be with the children, especially when they are little. For some parents this view of gender amounted to a natural law, something disobeyed at the expense of society. For others it was more flexible. Changing social contexts required adjustments such as a more egalitarian division of domestic responsibilities. But the basic fact remained. Men and women are naturally different. That difference is "fun" said one focus group of parents. Anything else, as Connell suggests, was literally unthinkable. It was not discussed as an alternative for the girls beyond the occasional comment that it "did not matter" to the parent if the girls chose to marry or not, or to have children or not, as long as they were happy and secure and as long as they did not have children at too young an age.

Given this acceptance that there are natural differences between males and females, the parents faced a second problem. Modern Canadian society is one in which the majority of married women and mothers are in the paid workforce, and in which women are among those who experience discrimination, are more likely to be poor, especially if they become a single parent, or when they are old. If the girls were to retain the approved aspects of femininity such as supportiveness, cooperation and caring for children, how could their parents and teachers also ensure that the girls would not be poor, would not be abused by their partners, or end up in insecure jobs with low pay and few benefits? More, parents wanted their daughters to do as well, and generally better than they had done themselves, to "not make my mistakes." They wanted them to be secure from harm, successful, and happy, something which they tied into a good income and job security. They also included in their thinking a general assumption that while different, women should be treated as equal to men. Their responses incorporated ideals about education and work. Working hard at school, getting good grades, going on to some kind of postsecondary training, being confident, making rational decisions, being ambitious, independent and highly motivated, could, they believed, ensure their daughters would be safe. That safety included physical, mental, and emotional safety.

Both the schools and the parents wanted to integrate the ideologies of education, work and gender roles in such a way that the girls could have a good life, but without losing that part of their femininity which they saw as valuable. They were not to be passive and dependent, and not to focus on pleasing boys. But they were to remain supportive, nice, and responsible for their children. They were to be respectful of authority, even when questioning aspects of it, and they were to stand up to male dominance. But they were not out to change the society. The traditional sex roles were to be reformed through "building character" or resocialization. Parents and schools were not deconstructing femininity, but rather reconstructing it to make it more compatible with masculinity and the world of education, work and family which they saw the girls entering.

Reconstructing Femininity

This resocialization through building character was to be accomplished through segregating the girls, and inculcating in them characteristics normally associated with masculinity. These characteristics are consistent with a set identified earlier by Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) as including physical strength, adventurousness, certainty, control, assertiveness, self-reliance, individuality, competitiveness, discipline, objectivity and rationality. Christian Girls' School (CGS) used outdoor activities and adventure as a means toward building character. Girls were to be pushed to expand what they had thought were their limits. They were not to give up. CGS in particular incorporates many of the elements of Victorian schools for girls, since it is based on a boys' school program, redesigning it for girls. At River City Junior High (RCJH), this element was absent, but making good (rational) decisions, having a clear goal, being self-reliant, assertive, confident, in control of oneself, disciplined, competitive, willing to take risks, and independent were very much part of the underlying goals of the program. While retaining much of their femininity, it would appear that the girls were to take on many masculine-identified traits. Those traits would enable them to stand up to men with respect but without fear, but also to make good relationships with them. As they began to take on these traits, girls would gain in self-confidence through their own accomplishments.

The girls were not to "make my mistakes." Parents often portrayed themselves as having wasted their school years, either by not working while in school, or by marrying right after school and not taking their education further. They wanted their daughters to do well in school and to establish themselves in a secure job or career before marriage. They were not even to get interested in sex "before she's 27," so that an untimely pregnancy would prevent their progress. Segregation meets these concerns because it removes the girls from the presence of boys, at least during the school day, and because it encourages them to refocus on school work. Both without the harassment and denigration, and without the need to dress and behave in ways thought to please boys, girls become free to "get on with [our] work." They would not be distracted. In this sense the segregation can be framed as a kind of cloistering. Cloistered, they were free to focus on their work, but they were also free from the need to think about and confront male dominance. They would be both free from distraction and at the same time distracted from what ailed them.

Watson (1996) takes this analysis further by arguing that removing them from a male-dominated world has the effect of silencing their resistance. In other words, without the experience of denigration and harassment, there is less knowledge and motivation to encourage critical analysis and to refuse a subordinated role. While the attitudes of the parents and the schools in my research clearly support the argument that they wanted the girls to do better in the existing social structures, and were not "out to change the world" as one staff member said, I do not think that there was evidence of an attempt to *silence* resistance. Rather, the parents and schools wanted to channel resistance into specific and achievement-oriented behaviours. They were focused on "gender proofing." The girls were to be taught how to resist the domination of males, to assert themselves and to be more autonomous. While this might have the effect of silencing resistance, that did not appear to me to be the intention. Rather the resistance was to be reconstructed as assertiveness, channelled into a determination to succeed, as well as redirected into being a "gender missionary," demanding a change of attitude in males. It is possible that both the social context in the British school system and the limited number of couples (this was a preliminary report on six interviews) explain the differing emphasis between my research and Watson's and I will be watching for the full results of this research with great interest. It is also possible that when parents segregate their daughters, and talk about removing them from distraction, they *are* thinking equality but without recognizing the social roots of gender inequality. They have individualized it. Given the psychology-based expert information available to them, such as in media presentations and self-help books and given that some girls do well in the existing school system, this cannot be seen as unreasonable.

"Silencing" to me seems an overstatement in the context of my own research, especially when I listen to the voices of the students I interviewed. Many of them were far from being silenced, for example in their resistance to the uniforms at the public school, and in one outright rebellion at the private school when students complained that staff were not living up to the rules imposed on students, and staged a protest. Rather than silencing, I would call what is happening diversion. Diversion is another word for distraction, and means to distract attention from something. Parents want to distract the attention of the girls from the boys, good or "bad" and divert it on to school work. They want the girls to be able to stand up to boys, but what is significant is that they do *not* want the girls to rebel against the social order. They are not to be feminists, not to be aggressive, not to blame or hate men. So rather than being silenced in the sense of having no voice, they are to have an individual, but not a collective voice. It is the girls as a group who are silenced through diversion from a social context which might raise their voices through anger (Larkin, 1994).

Protection and Control

Most of the students initially resisted being sent to a girls' school. They imagined it as religious, strict, uniformed and elitist. They often thought they would have to board, and dreaded the idea of being away from home, and from their friends. Once in the schools, however, they said that they felt free, it was more peaceful and they got to do more "girls' stuff." It was like being in a family and they felt they belonged. But they also wanted me to know that their enjoyment did not mean they hated boys. They just wanted to get on with their work. Removed from the denigration and harassment which many of them described, they said it was "just some jerks" who were doing the harassing, but that many of their friends were boys. Some said that in fact they preferred to be around boys rather than girls. It was not the boys' fault that they chose a segregated school. The girls just wanted to improve themselves, to get better grades and to be more confident.

In spite of resistance, parents, particularly mothers, had insisted that the girls go to the chosen school. Parental protectiveness overlapped with control. Parents wanted their daughters to be focused on school work, to do their homework, to be more motivated and disciplined. Several chose the school, especially the private school, because they wanted smaller classes and the stricter discipline that can go with that. The protective control of the parents revolved around concerns that the daughter would not be able to take care of herself unless she focused on doing well in school and on getting qualifications that would ensure she had a secure and challenging occupation. This was to be priorized over any interest in the opposite sex, least of all getting married and having children. Since this was what many of the mothers had done themselves, they were also the parent most likely to be pushing the daughter to be more independent. Although some parents saw this as compatible with their understanding of feminism, most either held qualified or negative views of the feminist movement and of feminists.

Feminism

The images of feminism which these parents presented to me did not reflect the complexity of feminist thought or the range of feminist actions. Rather, it sounded more like a kind of stock insult. Feminism was described as man-hating or male-bashing, and feminists as too aggressive and strident, and as wanting to be men. Their biggest fault was that they were attacking men. For the parents feminism also represented being demanding, wanting too much, being aggressive, all of which were inappropriate behaviours for a woman. If women were to become the same as men, gender difference would be lost, and they saw that difference as natural, as "fun" and as important. This comment came from a participant in a parents' focus group, and elicited much laughter from all of those present. It clearly had a heterosexual context. Most of them expected that their daughters would some day marry and have children, they just did not want them to do so at too early a stage in their careers.

For parents, the problem appears to lie in how feminists are perceived as working toward the goal of equality, which in itself is acceptable. Parents and schools in this research were clear that the girls were to become equal through their own, individual efforts. Feminists were seen as demanding that others do the changing, and as not doing the changing themselves. Feminism might also imply that the young women were "victims" waiting for a golden handshake, as a CGS staff member had said. This would not fit well with the strong independent women being constructed in the schools. As well, feminists were seen as women who wanted to be men, that is, they were abandoning *all* feminine traits, rather than the ones seen as problematic, and they were rejecting relationships with men, which were taken as natural. Feminists were therefore perceived as not nice, unfeminine and even unnatural by these parents. That was not how parents wanted their daughters to be.

As the students told me, "We have to be careful because we are a girls' school," we don't want to be seen as attacking men. It's "just some jerks" who were attacking us. "I have friends who are boys," and so on. They presented being feminist as the rejection of future relationships with men. Students rejected feminism because they did not want to be seen as hating boys, or to be too aggressive. They echoed the argument of Hogeland (1994) that for heterosexual young women, fighting for gender equality is uniquely problematic, since they also want relationships with members of the category with whom they are doing battle. As I suggested in chapter 3 they would be "sleeping with the enemy."

Some of the antipathy to feminism from the parents could have arisen from the decision to have parents decide if they would be interviewed separately or together. Alone they might have felt freer to speak about feminism and gendered behaviour. The difficulty of discussing gender equality is that it often puts men on the defensive. Even when they consider themselves to be feminist, they may be aware, as Connell (1995) points out, that all men benefit from patriarchy. Thus my talking about femininity with both parents together created the difficulty that criticisms of patriarchy were less likely to be voiced. Together, however, they generate ideas out of their joint discussions which can also be enlightening. Further research with individual parents would be helpful in shedding light on this source of possible bias in the findings in regard to feminism.

A Man Takes Care of His Own Business: Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?

Building character, developing independence, and planning for a future career are all individualized responses. Structural constraints are not part of this equation, and in fact feminism is rejected in some measure because feminists are attacking the accepted social (read gender) order. I heard few comments relating to the ways in which social structures, in the form of beliefs and values, as well as social institutions incorporating gender regimes, could act as constraints on girls. It was individual boys that were the problem, not the claim to masculinity that necessitated a demonstration of male dominance, physical prowess or virtility. It was the failure of the student to focus on her work, not the classroom practices of teachers or the curriculum itself. To address this problem, schools and parents look at the male as a norm or standard by which to see what adjustments to femininity need to be made. A man takes care of business by himself--why can't a woman do the same? They seem to be assuming that women can do so, without questioning whether, in fact, a man really does take care of his own business or whether it is possible to do so within existing social structures, or even, if such action is desirable.

Gender Proofing

Schools and parents were not trying to change the world. Rather, they wanted the girls to be able to fit into it more effectively, to do what they had to do and do it well. Nor were they questioning masculinity and femininity as sets of different traits and behaviours associated with biological sex. Most parents, students and teachers rejected feminism. Rather, they wanted to change the femininity of the girls so that they were no longer passive and subordinate but still remained feminine. They were in a sense innoculating them with a vaccine (called "character") to protect them from harm. They were "gender proofing" the girls by enabling them to "do" (in the words of West and Zimmerman, 1987) masculinity when needed.

Gender proofing begins with the observation that girls are losing their self-confidence, and accepting the dominance of boys. As the CGS staff member said, they "lacked spine." It was not so much that boys' behaviour was disrespectful, as that girls put up with it, which was the focus of concern. If girls refused to accept it, the behaviour would change. Thus the problem was seen as a deficiency in girls. This thinking echoes the "deficiency model" noted by Gaskell, McLaren and Novogrodsky (1989). When girls do less well in science and mathematics, it is attributed to their lack of self-confidence, or their intellectual differences from boys, but not to the classroom environment. To do better, they needed to learn confidence and to build their intellectual skills. Similarly, "building character" and better school performance were linked in gender proofing. It is building character to prevent harm.

The girls are to be strengthened or given spine to enable them to take charge of their own lives, be independent, not make decisions focused on boys and relationships but rather be focused on their own development. Gender proofing becomes important in early adolescence because this is when girls are "naturally" inclined to become interested in boys and in sexuality. But gender proofing is more than protection expressed in the choice of a segregated school. It includes building characteristics which will enable the girls to protect themselves. Further, by gaining confidence, when they do encounter disrespect from males, they will be able to confront and change the behaviour.

Education was priorized by the schools and the parents because it was seen as the key to future success and security. By changing the patterns of behaviour associated with being female, education could be part of gender proofing the girls, making them safe for their future lives. Proofing them against the weaknesses of femininity could prevent the girls from marrying too soon, from making a bad marriage, and especially from priorizing marriage over career. Gender proofing is similar to preventive health measures, in that it is proactive, and often emphasizes individual responsibility for outcomes. The girls were gaining educational capital (Bourdieu 1977). They were not to be part of what Bourdieu describes as the educational mortality rate. Rather, their educational achievements were intended to give them the job market edge they would need for "safety, security and success." Beyond those concerns of parents, and rooted in their hope that their daughters would not make their mistakes, is a concern for status, not so much in terms of socioeconomic class, as in terms of doing better than their parents, and in the ability to access a secure and safe lifestyle, one in which the young women would be "happy."

The uniform appears as a symbol of gender proofing. It embodies protectiveness, control and character-building. It was supported by all of the parents for several reasons. First, they said that uniforms eliminate the distraction of dressing to please others, and of competing for popularity by wearing the latest designer labels to be in fashion. Following on that, it also eliminates status hierachies based on clothing, since everyone wore the same things. It makes the girls more equal. Second, the uniform focuses their attention on schoolwork. Wearing it, parents argued, was like dressing to go to work, and would remind the girls that they had a job to do. Third, wearing the uniform inculcates a sense of loyalty to the school. It marks the girls as being members of that school, which in turn means that their behaviour is also marked. They stand out when wearing it. Thus the girls are segregated and marked to assist them in becoming focused on their work and through that, becoming independent and self-sufficient. At the same time, wearing a uniform distances them from their peers, and through that, from their former school lives. It marks them as segregated, and as cloistered, which calls forth the insult of being snobs but also reinforces their diversion from the coeducational school world which is dominated by boys. They are now considered "lezzies" which is also unacceptable.

The students generally disliked the uniform, especially those at the public school. While some said they thought it made getting dressed in the morning easier, and looked nice when they went out together as a school, they hated the uniformity that it created, and their loss of individuality. They also felt marked and RCJH students experienced that marking in the jibes and insults which they received when on the streets or on public transportation. To avoid being called "lezzies" and "snobs" many RCJH students resorted to changing out of the uniform before they went home. The uniform symbolized the shift from a coeducational peer culture to the character to be built by the girls' schools, and the social distance that created between the two sets of students. Heyward (1997) argues that school uniforms give an ambiguous message in that they reflect masculine work clothing, but conceal the adult feminine body, "infantalizing" it. The students resented the claim that the uniform presented them as "working girls." They did not see it as equivalent to the clothing of a professional woman, but rather as childish. For them it was more a reminder that they were not adults. This frustration with the uniform stands in contrast to the comments of parents that they saw their children growing up too soon, and that they noticed them playing at children's games again after going to the girls' school.

Changing Gender Relations

In their interviews, both parents and school staff made reference to the naturalness of gender. That women and men are different was a taken-for-granted assumption, part of their stock of tacit knowledge. But the importance of education to gaining a good job, acceptance that while they might expect the girls to marry, marriages could fail, and the vulnerability of women to poverty were also part of that knowledge, challenging full acceptance of the domestic role for women and its implied dependence on a husband and father. Their understanding of gender was also based on assumptions that men are naturally dominant and aggressive, but women should not be so. Given their understanding that women are the more vulnerable sex, and their daughters particularly so, parents wanted to take some action which would protect the girls while not harming the best of their "natural" feminine characteristics. They wanted their daughters to be able to demand respect from boys or men, to be able to develop a more equal relationship if they married and to gain access to a secure occupation.

Parents had several available alternatives. They could encourage their daughters to become involved in feminist action for example. But because they saw feminists as unnatural, as not being feminine, that alternative was seen as at best doubtful, if not completely unacceptable. They could also have sent their daughters to a private boarding school further away from home. But for the parents in my study this was not an option, due to financial restrictions, a desire to keep the daughter close to home, or both, which in turn is part of their protectiveness. They could also have left their daughters in a coeducational school and assisted them in developing self-confidence and standing up to the boys. This had clearly been rejected because they believed their daughters were too attracted to, or intimidated by, the boys. Their choice was to place their daughters in a school which was close to home, and which was single-sex, removing the distracting boys. This, the parents believed, would allow their daughters to focus on their work while also building character: that is, developing desirable traits to add to their "natural" femininity. I have categorized this as "gender proofing." The girls could then return to a coeducational high school or university, and be gender missionaries demanding different relations with the males there, but *not questioning male dominance*, or the gender order on which it is based.

Biologically-based understandings of gender have been criticized by sociologists of gender for their failure to address the social context. When the schools and the parents emphasize individual responses, it is possible they could make the girls more, not less, vulnerable because they are ignoring or denying the existence of ruling relations (Smith 1990a, 1990b). When they do not make explicit the workings of power either to themselves or the girls, they allow, even encourage its reproduction. The schools and the parents are themselves located within ruling practices and relations of power. Individual solutions to gender problems cannot work because they will be attempted in a social context which includes gender regimes. In schools, universities, and at places of employment, assumptions about who men and women are, and what they can do or will do are based on gendered assumptions. It is often hard to know when those assumptions are operating, especially when the person using them is also unaware of their existence. It is even harder to combat the subtle discrimination that flows from those assumptions, such as valuing secretarial work as less than that of the "executive assistant," or running training programs in the evenings, and assuming a mother who does not attend is not interested in promotion. Gender permeates social institutions, and is itself formed within the relations and practices of ruling (Smith, 1990a).

School organization, the division of labour in the family and the practices of the workplace all reflect assumptions about, and the practices of, gender which require certain responses from men and women. An ideology of individualism and self-sufficiency reflects the prevailing norms of capitalism, norms that place hard work, independence and success over values of community, caring or nurturance, inherently making feminine-identified traits inferior to those of masculinity. Trained to cope by themselves, the girls could become vulnerable through self-blame rather than seeing the structural sources of their situation, structures that continue to denigrate and discriminate on the grounds of sex. A study of sexual harassment (Martin, 1995) and a study of rape (Scully, 1990) both show that one common reaction by a woman who is being harassed is to feel guilt, to accept at least some blame for the behaviour. Scully also found that rapists commonly blamed their victims, and that the criminal justice system operated in ways that reinforced that blaming. Since much discrimination is harder to identify than sexual harassment or rape (and many victims have trouble naming these experiences), it is even more likely to lead to self-doubt if not self-blame.

But what the parents and schools wish to change is gender relations, not the gender order itself. The girls are to retain those characteristics associated positively with femininity, but by acquiring some more masculine-identified traits they will be able to relate differently to males. They will demand respect, while remaining different. The students themselves loved being separated out, but they also wanted to be added back in. In an interview in which they talked of knowing about teachers' boyfriends, the RCJH students said they did not want to live alone, but they did want to have an interesting career. They talked about this in many of the same ways identified by McLaren (1996). Having a career could conflict with having a family. The students knew this but thought that the skills they were gaining at the school would enable them to "have it all" if they wished. By being confident, and getting a good education, they expected to be able to stand up to the boys, and later to make egalitarian relationships in which domestic responsibilities were shared, as well as having a career, running a business, or having an interesting occupation. They would relate to men differently, but they would not change the gender order, which is based on male dominance. In fact, since their assertive stance was one which had been built on male-identified traits, male superiority, and through it the claim to male dominance, that dominance was left in place.

Asked about the women's studies component in the curriculum, most parents said that it was all right as long as it did not detract from the "real" curriculum, and as long as it was not male-bashing. It was as if any female-centred knowledge was added on to what is perceived as knowledge about "people" and therefore created an imbalance. The implied criticism of men was unacceptable, but the predominantly male orientation of the original curriculum was not questioned or even remarked on. This is significant in light of the fact that parents would talk about the women's studies component as good for the girls, so they could learn about women who would serve as role models. Obviously that had been acknowledged as missing previously. The significance of its absence is ignored. Further, parents were very concerned about their daughters' ability in science and mathematics. These two subjects, traditionally dominated by males, were discussed as if they were central to the goal of a good occupation. In fact, one parent said that math was the basis of "everything." The need for good communication skills and for creativity, seen as feminine characteristics, was less emphasised. At CGS creativity was linked with entrepreneurial skills in the Business and Fine Arts program. It was viewed, at least in part, as a way of generating income from home. Given this setting, it is hardly surprising that the peer culture of the students at the public school remained relatively unchanged. It continued to develop within hierarchical relations but also within a context which while seemingly removed from male influence, was still permeated by it.

Reproducing the Gender Order

Because both parents and schools are part of these ruling relations, and because the practices of schooling and parenting are "doing" power as well as gender they reproduce the gender order. Their tacit understanding or knowledge that gender is natural and unquestionable becomes part of the reproduction of power and of the gender order. Their acceptance of the right of school administration and employers to define how education and work should be organized and what kind of people will do well, contributes to the reproduction of gender and power within those institutions.

Bem (1993) defines androcentrism as the use of the male as the norm or standard against which all else is judged, arguing that patriarchy as male dominance is perpetuated when androcentrism, a concept of gender as natural and unchangeable and a focus on sex difference come together. It seems to me that in their validation of the core curriculum, and especially in the importance which they place on science and math, both the schools and the parents contribute to the reproduction of androcentrism. Together with their insistence that men and women are naturally different, and their focus on femininity as the problem, it facilitates, or at least does not openly challenge the continuation of patriarchal ruling practices and relations.

A New Order Within the Schools

The social and gendered context of the two schools remained unchanged, but within them the girls found themselves removed from the gender regimes of their coeducational schools, and placed in a new order, one where they felt they belonged. It gave them confidence through their new relationships with teachers, through being able to speak out in the classroom and compete in sports, and through the higher grades which followed. At the same time, they saw both their former denigration and their present achievements as the result of their own behaviour, or as "just some jerks," unpleasant individuals who did not know how to behave. Since the gender order which they had left was a taken-for-granted reality, one in which the workings of gender was made most visible through harassment and denigration by boys, they were not gaining insights into the gender order which they had left, but rather, gaining the skills seen as needed to deal with adolescent males attempting to assert superiority.

This was a time out for the girls, a time when they were being treated as important. They told me how much they enjoyed classes when "you ask a question and it's answered or you make a comment and it's listened to." Again, the implication is that they were not listened to previously. Larkin (1994) found that when she talked with girls in coeducational schools about sexual harassment, an unexpected result was that their awareness and their resistance was raised. "Their voices that had initially 'cracked with qualification'[1] became strong and determined as they shared common experiences . . . they were becoming a force to be reckoned with" (p. 121). In other words, by talking about the sexual harassment, not as something which they had brought upon themselves, or as the natural behaviour of boys, but as something that is wrong, demeaning and undermining of self-esteem for girls, the students became more aware, and more determined not to accept the behaviour. To what extent could this happen in the two schools studied?

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[1] This is a reference attributed by Larkin to Herbert (1988) "Talking of Silence: The Sexual Harassment of Schoolgirls."

Larkin's findings point to the importance of vocalizing experience. Harassment can be "just some jerks" only until one discovers that it is widespread and pervasive. Since the students had told me many personal stories of harassment and intimidation, I expected them to be aware at least that it might be expected from many boys. This turned out not to be true. Several layers appear to be at work here. My research among women in a resource-based town had shown how women may survive in a male dominated if not macho environment by incorporating elements of the culture and taking pride in their ability to cope. Although I did not hear this message from the students, there was a similar strain of not wanting to change their environment. Boys' behaviour was simply what boys were like, and what they had to do was learn to cope with it.

Secondly, the schools were not promoting critical analysis of the students' past experiences. They looked on them as something to put in the past, and be remedied through raising self-confidence, rather than self-awareness. They wanted the students to know that women could be strong, and had made significant contributions to history and knowledge in Canada, but they did not encourage the students to be critical about the invisibility of women in their past school curriculum. Rather, the girls were to individually change how society viewed women.

Third, the students *were* reporting greater success. What is significant here are their comments that they felt they belonged, and that the schools were like family to them. The majority of students liked being in a girls' school. They talked about different relationships with each other and with the teachers, and about not being able to "hide" in class, having to participate. Both of these factors contribute to better school performance. Consequently, while I initially focused on comments such as "it's so peaceful here" and "I feel more free" and "we are listened to" assuming that the segregation was the main contributor to improved performance, school and class size were also contributing factors. As well, the girls knew that the schools had been set up especially for them, so that they also felt important and valued, perhaps for the first time in school. Thus, while it was clear that they did enjoy being without boys, it is not possible to argue that this, by itself, was the reason for their better performance. More likely it was the particular combination of variables--no boys, small classes, and a focus on the potential of the girls.

Comparing two girls' schools makes it possible to investigate constructions of femininity. What is not available is an investigation of other variables which might have an impact on their academic performance and on their attitudes about themselves and their education. Would the results be the same in a girls' school with large classes? And would constructions of femininity be the same in a coeducational school? This research was not experimental, and there were no controls over variables. A recent article by Mael (1998) suggests that the argument for segregated girls' schools is more complex than is often thought, and that the better performance of the girls who attend one might well result from the confounding influence of other factors such as class size, the "specialness" of being singled out, and different relations with teachers. It is not possible to say that these schools were better than a coeducational environment could be, and much more research needs to be done in a variety of schools to determine what are the significant variables in the issue.

My research makes clear that these girls were doing better in their segregated schools. I wondered, however, to what extent being segregated might both enhance their self-confidence and strength, but also reinforce their differences and distance them from their peers. Since they were treated with some hostility as "lezzies" and "snobs" when in public, the girls might reasonably be expected to have to deal with that if they return to a coeducational high school. Their new-found confidence might be compounded by social distance, making their position a difficult one to handle on an individual basis. However, were the schools to become more explicitly feminist, incorporating a critical analysis of society into their curriculum, current stereotypes of feminist thought could jeopardise their market. Thus they are put in the position of being "closet feminist." In a sense, this is a good descriptor of their stance. They are building strong young women who are to take up an equal place in the world but not be feminists. Again, one solution is to integrate feminist thought and analysis into *public* school programs such that it becomes an accepted part of knowledge building and the curiculum, alongside other perspectives on society.

Graduates of the two schools might make the connection between the need to be segregated and the behaviour of the boys, seeing it as wrong, not as natural. When they return to a coeducational high school or go on to university, the girls may experience culture shock as they find that once again they do not "belong." But the emphasis on "building character" gives a message of individual responsibility that does not appear to encourage further analysis of the boys' behaviour. Rather, by calling the girls' former responses "distraction" it distracted them from seeing their treatment as not only unacceptable, but also as morally indefensible, as harassment. Theories which focus on the social context in which gender is constructed suggest to me that gender proofing sets the girls and the schools up for failure. If the girls become more masculine, career oriented, or successful, they are likely to be seen as deviant, undesirable to men, feminists and lesbians. If they retain their femininity, remaining "nice," not aggressive and not competitive at the expense of others, they are less likely to gain access to secure and challenging jobs.

The gender order is made possible by the practices and the relations of ruling. It is reproduced in part through the workings of tacit knowledge about the naturalness and unquestionability of traits associated with masculinity and femininity. More recent critical studies which focus on the social construction of gender are varied and complex. It would not be reasonable to expect parents to be aware of these arguments, especially as they are often not written in ways that are easily interpreted by a lay person (Heather, 1993). Consequently, parents accept the gender order itself as natural, unchangeable, and unquestionable. They seem unaware of the three "lenses of gender" on which Bem argues it is based (1993). They do not acknowledge, much less critique, gender regimes in schools, work and families, nor do they talk about the interrelationship with class and status. Rather, they make decisions which they hope will improve their daughter's position within the order, making them safe, secure, successful and happy. Their attitudes to feminism, to women's studies, to the uniform, and to the importance of science and mathematics suggest to me that they are more than just not aware of the gender order however. Particularly in the public school, it is possible to see how the conflicts among parents, the responses of teachers and the impact of an existing and bureaucratic organization work to perpetuate a social order that is hierarchical and based on class as well as gender. Because this hierarchy remains unquestioned, the peer culture of the students reflects that social hierarchy. Popular girls are wealthy, have travelled, and own all the right clothes and accoutrements. Their popularity includes, but is not focused on, academic achievement.

The gender order is seen as natural, unchangeable, and not to be questioned. In fact, through the responses of the schools and parents it is reinforced and reproduced, and the parents and schools do not want it to be changed. They think that male ways of doing things are the best ways to do them. Girls have to "catch up" to males, to be as good as they are. Girls have something to offer also--their best feminine traits. They are equal to males but not the same as males. To challenge that would be to challenge the basis of society itself.

Rather, they want to add their daughters in by first separating them out. Beyond adding them in, they want them to be successful in the existing order.

At the same time, the privileged position of the students, their enjoyment of their schools and the feeling that they belong there, while they did not belong in their coeducational schools, could lead some students to resist and to demand changes that at least to some extent allow them to continue to feel as if they belong. If girls' schools are not the solution to ending the gender order, they may at least be a temporary measure that contributes some new voices of resistance.

Contribution of this Research and Further Questions

The research contributes to our understanding of gender by demonstrating the way in which tacit knowledge can contribute to the reproduction and continuation of the gender order. Parents, teachers and students are located within structures that are permeated with gender and with power. They try to reconcile the conflicting ideologies of social institutions such as family, education and work with the ideology of gender, changing the nature of femininity. Like the proverbial fish in its ocean, they know about, but cannot see the gender order through which they swim, and to continue that analogy, if they allowed their knowledge of the order to surface, they might drown, just as focusing on how one breathes can sometimes lead one to choke. At the same time the review of literature on gender suggests that reconstructions of femininity could have the effect of creating resistance. While something that is perceived as real is real in its consequences, those consequences may not always be the ones intended.

Girls' schools may be seen as a temporary solution, and "build character." They could also deliberately incorporate a feminist perspective, inviting the students to critically analyze their social position as women and possibly as members of other minority groups also. This research invites the two schools to reassess their goals, while at the same time informing them as to the process by which parents arrived at a decision to send their daughters to that particular school. The difficulty is that they are appealing to a "market" of parents who want their daughters to be able to have a satisfying and secure job, as well as an egalitarian relationship, and who see segregation, discipline and the building of character as the way to have their daughters achieve that goal. While becoming overtly feminist would go beyond gender proofing and might make stronger and more effective young women, it could also make them less attractive to their market.

The advantage of a case study such as this one is that it allows the researcher to focus on a specific problem, in this case, constructions of femininity, in a particular manifestation of its construction, that is, when it can be seen more clearly. The disadvantages are first, that confounding variables such as class size cannot be controlled for. Second, a case study is limited to the study of a particular set of respondents at a particular time. Since these were staff, parents and students who had selected one of two particular girls' schools, they may well not be typical of parents, teachers or students generally, or even of other parents selecting other girls' schools with a different focus. For this reason the research needs to be seen as a beginning, and as pointing out directions for more exploration. A followup study of the graduates of these schools might indicate to what extent they are resistant or accepting of the gender order, and what impact they see the school as having when they are adults. Research in coeducational and boys' schools might bring out more nuances in the differing views of parents, deepening understanding of their conceptualization of gender. More research is also needed to establish why minority group members were slow to support the schools and still have not done so in large numbers. Thus, much more work needs to be done before an understanding of how the ideology of gender, and tacit knowledge about gender, interact in the lives of parents, teachers and the students they want to help.

Specifically, the research questions some of the arguments made by critical thinkers in the sociology of gender. Earlier I pointed out that Watson's (1996) claim that sending girls to a segregated school silences them needs some modification to fit my findings. Watson's claim may, however, change when the full research results are analyzed. As well, Connell's (1987) description of an emphasized femininity and a host of other unremarked femininities is inadequate to explain my findings. The "superwoman" model which I uncover does not fit Connell's emphasized femininity, and yet does accept the construction of femininity as subordinate to hegemonic masculinity, and is "(re)marked." It is validated not just in this case study, but by the writings of the popular media who portray a world in which women can "have it all." I would argue that Connell's model is far to simple, and needs further research to uncover the complexities through which individuals in their everyday lives try to reconcile gender with other ideologies. Finally, while girls can be shown to achieve more when segregated in girls' schools, three factors should give us pause. The first is that unless the school offers them tools to critically analyze their position in the larger society, they are vulnerable to continued self-blame and self-doubt once they leave school, made worse by the belief that now they ought to be able to cope. Secondly, the boys do not do as well when separated out. This suggests to me that masculinity itself cannot be left as unproblematic.

The participants often talked about gender as "natural." That term did not in every instance equate with "biological" however. One group of parents at a focus group told me that they "knew" gender was learned, but they believed men and women are different, and that that was "fun." They did not want it to change. "Natural" in this sense, refers more to what is always there, what are customary or expected behaviours. If there is any intent to change those behaviours, it rests on the expectation that by changing the behaviour of the girls, they will become "missionaries" changing the behaviour of the boys they meet on return to a coeducational environment.

It was clear that these parents and school staff were aware of the social context, including the structural constraints in which their daughters would get an education and enter an occupation. At least during the interviews for this study, they did not express an interest in developing strategies for changing that context or removing the constraints. My interpretation is that they accepted the context and the constraints as givens, not so much as unchangeable but as something over which they as individuals had no control. Given that understanding they made decisions on behalf of their daughters which were designed both to protect them and to position them for maximum advantage in the existing social order. If it is not in your hands to change the behaviour of boys or of future employers, or of the economy itself, segregating your daughter to make her confident and give her good coping skills makes perfect sense. But by definition, that strategy perpetuates the social order, and with it, gender inequality.

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APPENDIX A
GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Parents and Teachers:

I. CONNECTIONS

- i) What were the factors that led up to your involvement with this school?
- ii) Were you educated in a coeducational or a single-sex school?
- iii) What are your memories of your own junior high school years?
- iv) What do you want for yourself and your (student/daughter) from this school?
- v) Do you have other children? Do they go, or will you send them to, a segregated school?
- vi) What has been your daughter's experience in school to this point?

II. EDUCATION

- i) How would you compare the advantages of a girls' school with a coeducational school?
- ii) What are the disadvantages?
- iii) How did your daughter get along with her teachers in her previous school/ now?
- iv) What do you think about the discipline in public schools?
- v) What changes, if any, would you like to see happen at this school in the next 10 years?
- vi) What do you think about the uniform?
- vii) What do you think of the program? What about women's studies?

III. GENDER

- i) How would you characterize this school, compared to your daughter's previous school?
- ii) Young people of this age group are expected to be very focused on their bodies, and in sex. Do you see that happening with your daughter/the students? How does she/they express that?
- iii) What do you see as the advantages/disadvantages of the segregation from boys?
- iv) What are the friendship patterns among the students? How do you perceive them?
- v) What makes a girl/group of girls popular or unpopular?
- vi) Does she keep in touch with friends from the previous school at all?
- vii) Do you think the girls behave differently than they do in a coeducational school? Can you give me any examples?
- viii) Have there been any differences in your relationship with your daughter/the students in how they behave in this school?
- ix) What would be the most important characteristics or abilities you would like them to have when they leave?

APPENDIX A continued

x) How would you define "success" for your daughter/the students?
xi) When the students go on to another school, what do you think this school will have offered them that might help them in a mixed-sex environment?
xii) What do you hope the students will be doing 10 years from now? What kinds of decisions do you see them facing?
xiii) What will this school have contributed to that?
xiv) How would you respond if your daughter/the students were to declare themselves a feminist?
xv) How would you respond if your daughter/a student said she was pregnant and wanted to keep the baby?

Students:

I. CONNECTIONS

i) Tell me a little about yourself--do you have brothers and sisters? How old are they?
ii) What do you most like to do, in or out of school?
iii) What were the factors involved in your coming to this school?
iv) How did you hear about it?
v) What did you expect it would be like? What were your major concerns and hopes about it?
vi) What kinds of school have you attended before this one? How do they compare--what was different, and what seems the same? Did you have the same friends? Was the school friendly? Did you like the teachers? How about the students?
vii) Do you keep in touch with your friends from those schools?
viii) What classes did you take? What were the extracurricular activities? What did you do with friends? How does that compare to now?

[illegible]DUCATION

i) How would you describe this school to someone who had never heard of it?
ii) What reasons might you give a friend for coming/not coming here?
iii) How do you feel about the girls who come here? Are they easy/difficult to get along with? What do you grumble about together?! What do you talk about that you really like?
iv) What characteristics would a popular group of girls have? What makes a group or a girl unpopular? What are the ways to behave around friends?
v) How do you feel about wearing a uniform?
vi) What do you think is the most important thing for you about this school?

APPENDIX A continued

FUTURE GOALS

i) Where do you see yourself in 10 years? What do you think you would like to be doing?

ii) Has that changed since you were in elementary?

iii) In what ways do you think this school will help you get to that point?

iv) If a teacher were to say to you, "I want you to be successful," what would you assume they meant? What images come into your mind?

v) Feminism is getting a lot of bad press just recently. Do you see yourself as possibly being or becoming feminist in some ways as likely to be one when you are older?

APPENDIX B
RESEARCH INTO TWO GIRLS' SCHOOLS
Brief Project Description

My name is Barbara Heather, and I am completing my doctoral thesis in the Department of Sociology, at the University of Alberta. I am conducting a case study of two girls' schools in the Edmonton area, of which [*name of school*] is one, and I am asking for your help. My research focuses on the innovative nature of girls'-only schooling, especially the reasons and experiences that led to the development of this school, and your decision to become involved. The research is intended to contribute to a better understanding of how individuals think about girls and education, and it is hoped that the information generated will also be useful to the school, and to its wider community, including parents.

My research is based primarily on interviews. I will be interviewing broadly, talking with principals, curriculum coordinators, teachers, parents and students. I am asking for your participation in the interview process. Interviews will be tape recorded, will take one to two hours, depending on your availability, and will be in a location convenient for you. They will take place between March and June 1996. On some occasions a followup interview may be requested. Parents of daughters who want to be interviewed will be asked to give their permission before the interview takes place.

I wish to assure you that all information will be treated as confidential, and the identities of people participating will not be revealed. My purpose is to report generally what I learn from you about all girls' schools. If, when writing about my findings, I want to quote directly from an interview, I will first ask the permission of the speaker.

This topic is timely, and of great importance. I would very much appreciate your help as someone with first-hand knowledge. As in all research it will not be possible to speak to everyone involved, and also some interviews may be held in the form of small group discussions. My principal concern is to get a sample which represents administrators, teachers, parents and students, so that I can ensure a broad understanding of the girls' schools.

Your help in participating in the research would be most appreciated. If you have any questions, please call me. My home telephone number is: (403) 434-8926 (unlisted). Advisors for the research are Dr. Harvey Krahn and Dr. Judith Golec, both of whom can be reached at the address and telephone number on the letterhead above.

APPENDIX C
STATEMENT ON CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

To protect anonymity and confidentiality, the following measures will be taken:

1. Transcripts of interviews will be numbered, not named, and the identity of the participant known only to the researcher.
2. Transcripts will not be read by anyone other than the researcher, and in specific instances (such as to clarify a finding) by members of the advisory committee for this research. Committee members will not be told the identity of the participant.
3. Interviews will be summarized and organised under general headings, rather than reported on individually.
4. If requested, participants will be able to review the transcript of their interview and make changes.
5. No quotations from interviews will be made without the consent of the speaker
6. Information that for any reason appears to be traceable will not be used without consent.
7. Any participant wishing to do so may withdraw from the research at any time.
8. The real names of the schools will not be revealed.

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM

I have read the description of the all girls' school research project at [*name of school*] and the statement of confidentiality and anonymity. I am willing to be interviewed for this project, and understand that I may withdraw at any time should I wish to do so.

NAME: PHONE NUMBER:

ADDRESS:

Please check one (or more if appropriate):

I am _____ a teacher or other staff member
_____ a parent
_____ a volunteer/member of a committee/ board member
_____ a student**

Best times to contact me are:

SIGNATURE:

** Students: If you are interested in participating in this research, the consent of your parent or guardian is also required.

APPENDIX D continued

Permission of Parents for Daughter's Participation

Dear

Your name has been given to me by your daughter, _______________ who has expressed her willingness to be interviewed for research on girls' schools which I am presently carrying out. A description of that research is enclosed, and you are also invited to participate. Permission for me to interview your daughter would be greatly appreciated. If you are willing to give your consent, would you please fill out and sign the section below, and return it to me at the above address? Thank you,

Barbara Heather

NAME:

I am a parent/guardian of_________________. I have read the description of the research project on all girls' schools, together with the statement of confidentiality and anonymity, and understand that participants may withdraw at any time. This letter gives my permission for _________________ to be interviewed as part of the project at [*name of school*].

Signature:

Date:

I would like to be interviewed for this project also. Please contact me at:

APPENDIX E
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

TWO GIRLS' SCHOOLS

**RCJH refers to a public, all girls' school, which I call "River City Junior High". CGS refers to a private all girls' school, which I call "Christian Girls' School".

What follows is a first summary of my findings, together with some of my thoughts and dialogues with myself which arose as I went through my interviews. There appear to be not so many points of view as there are voices. That is, I am finding broad general agreements but many different ways of expressing them or reasons for holding them.

FOCUS ON SUCCESS

Parents want their daughters to be *successful*. This is interpreted variously as being confident and happy, having a career of one's choice, doing what one wants to, including being a stay at home mother if that is right for the young woman, never being financially dependent on a man, going to university, "maxing out on one's potential", achievement - getting to the top or achieving one's goals, finishing what was begun. In some instances success is equated with being popular, and with having a strong social network - knowing the right people and/or having good friends. Success is tied closely to confidence - girls in a segregated school will become more confident and will be better able to cope in a coed world. They will perform as well as the boys and compete with them, which will help to "educate" the boys, eliminating discrimination. I refer to this later as "gender proofing".

CHOICE OF SCHOOL

Parents view school as an avenue to success, but have different views and priorities as to what the school needs to offer.

Public/Private

Some emphasise differences between public and private schools such as small classrooms, more highly motivated and supportive teachers, and a more challenging program - one that demands the same mental and physical achievements of girls as it does of boys. Private schools are less bound by school board regulations regarding discipline, say parents. Teachers can take alternative measures, such as extra homework, community work, or making amends for the behaviour in other ways. They are also more likely to be backed up by parents. Private schools seem better able to make a student be responsible for their own behaviour, to learn self-discipline. While a well-motivated child can do well in the public school, several say, the public schools do nothing to encourage motivation. Parents choosing the public school cite costs, but also many said they did not want to be part of a two-tiered system, or were not interested in having their daughter in an "elite" school. Some said they thought that weaknesses in the public school system should be addressed from within, not by sending children to a private school.

Size

Many parents talked about the size of the school and/or individual classes, seeing a smaller class as being less intimidating, and as a place where each student is better known and responded to on a personal level. It is not as easy to get lost in a small classroom, or even to act out. The teacher student relationship is very different. There is a different dynamic in a small classroom, say teachers and parents, and a student comments she feels freer to ask questions and work on her own.

Segregation

Parents, techers and students say that segregated schooling allows daughters to focus on academics and to compete in sports without the "distractions" of a coed school. These have to do with boys who are the leaders of peer groups, and who determine popularity ratings. They also "silence" girls verbally and physically, harass them, shout them down etc. Distraction also refers to hours spent dressing to impress the boys and gain status among other girls, general time spent focusing on boys, the loss of academic focus in junior high, and of self confidence and independence, and the distractions of being in a large class and school where many other things can compete for one's attention. Sex is less "in your face," "dirty talk" in the halls is gone, and it is easier to teach respect for the opposite sex. Segregated schools can experiment with curriculum more, adding in women's studies and independent studies components because discipline is easier, and because there is less resistance. Segregated schools are seen as able to demand more of girls - physically and mentally. They give girls the same expectations normally reserved for boys. Girls can join sports activities without having to feel overwhelmed by the boys. Both schools encourage the girls to challenge themselves without having to measure up to standards set by others - boys or teachers - and to take on new areas such as outdoor activities or science.

Discipline

Parents are concerned about discipline, which they see as easier and better in segregated schools. They sometimes admit they have trouble with using discipline themselves, and want the school to instil good work habits and respectful attitudes in their daughters. They see some of the problems with discipline, and with boys' behaviour in particular, as their own fault. Teachers say that having only girls makes for far less discipline problems.

"Cloistering"

It would be easy to see support of segregated schools as cloistering girls so that they can focus on their academics, gain confidence etc, but also to keep them away from all the distractions. The emphasis for most parents was not on cloistering, however, so much as on safety and security, and the students talked about freedom and peacefulness in the classroom. A segregated school leaves girls free to do their work and to explore a range of possibilities for themselves. They can develop self-respect and self-confidence. Their stress levels are reduced through removal from name calling etc, and also through not having to work on their appearance and personality to please others. Now they can be themselves.

The students say they do not hate boys or want to keep away from them. They just want to be able to get on with their work. At Christian Girls' School, the smallness of the school, its isolation and residential program can add to a sense of security through the development of trust and strong friendships between students and staff members.

Parents want their daughters to feel secure. They are protective of them, especially during the junior high school years which have beome identified as a time of particular vulnerability due to hormonal and emotional changes. That safety was also a safety from the "wrong crowd" - peers getting into smoking, drugs, alcohol, sex and other kinds of trouble, and in this sense might be seen as cloistering.

GENDER PROOFING

At the heart of "success" and of much of the support for an all girls' school is a belief that girls need to develop confidence and self-esteem. That they have less than boys, and that they lose more of it in junior high. Junior high is often cited as the one time when girls need segregating - this is *gender proofing* - giving girls what they need to ignore or to confront sexism, and to achieve their own goals. Gender proofing will enable girls to cope with a discriminating coed world, help them to feel good about themselves, and to be strong, leaders and achievers, but also to be "gender missionaries" - they will change the behaviour of boys/men through standing up to, and educating them. However, it is not just as women that they are seen as needing personal strength. It is also in setting and following their own path, resisting peer pressures, not becoming subject to others in any way. Confidence was variously described as changing from "I can't" to "I can", believing in one's self, knowing that one can succeed at something, not worrying about appearance as much, not trying to be perfect (especially in looks), going after what one wants to know regardless of the views of others, a sense of self, being able to fail at something without being crushed, finishing something started.

Building Character

Building character relates to gender proofing also. It is the inculcation of characteristics in girls which are seen both as generally missing and as desirable. They are mostly those characteristics which are attributed to boys - risk taking, competitiveness, action, controlling one's own life through an ability to think critically and make good decisions. Building character was described as learning a work ethic, building study skills, being a strong person and a leader, learning self-discipline and self-control, being motivated to succeed, taking on new challenges, learning to work with others, being independent and a unique individual - withstanding pressures to conformity. To compete on the same playing field as boys, said one teacher, girls have to have greater physical and mental endurance - they have to be able to go further because they are "comers" - they are new players in the game. But developing these characteristics is seen as hampered by a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, by being afraid to be who you are, and by being intimidated easily. Girls prefer to work with consensus not competition. Several times parents and teachers argued that women are more comfortable working as equals. However, the peer culture in a girls only setting (see below) is far from egalitarian.

Descriptions of Gendered Behaviour by Participants

Boys are described as the leaders in a classroom or peer group, the ones who decide what's cool, the ones with the social power. Boys can be "nice" but some/many (depending on participant) are physically, emotionally and mentally cruel, harass, sexually and by denigrating girls' actions and classroom work. Boys are the discipline problems, the "misbehavers," the ones who are entertaining, who make school less boring. Boys are less mature than girls, but their presence is more powerful. They get more attention in class and on the playing field. Boys accept hierachy, authority and discipline better than girls (perhaps to show their independence and strength?). "Boys will be boys" - their behaviour is "natural."

Girls are described as quieter, less independent, less willing to take risks. They are afraid to be who they are, conscious of being judged for their appearance, and generally different from the boys. But girls can also be "mean with their mouths" and there were a few stories of physical violence by girls toward other girls. They have a pecking order when segregated, with the "popular" group being those with greater social power (see below).

PEER CULTURE

Coed Schools

According to the students, and corroborated by the memories of parents, and of teachers, in a coed school the boys "rule." Either in groups or "factions" as one student called them, or individually, boys lead the way in defining who is popular, what are the criteria of success, especially for a girl and what is a good or bad contribution in class. Once boys have determined who is "in" or "out" - as one student put it, the boys "outcast" girls who have offended them or who don't have the looks they consider sexy or acceptable. The girls reinforce that status with their own particular methods, verbal and physical.

Popularity

Popularity is important to students, and to some of the parents also. It is seen as a mark of social skill, as status, and "success." "Everyone wants to be popular" said a student. "Popular" is a popular word, but appears to have a great deal loaded on to it. The popular girl is thin, good looking, knows what clothes to wear, listens to the right music, knows about the latest technological innovations, or better still owns them (cellular phone, modem etc), and is liked by the boys. She is not necessarily nice, but she belongs to a popular group. Popularity appears to mean "social power," a power that comes from within school and outside school status. Popular girls generally come from families with sufficient income to be able to afford the right clothes, the hair cuts, dental treatments and other accoutrements of good appearance, the computers, telephones and the travel, especially abroad, which can command attention. Girls may also gain membership for their ability in sports or academics, or in an activity such as drama.

In a coed school, girls compete for the attention of boys and to belong to a popular boys' group. They pay attention to clothes, make-up, and behaviour in order to attract male attention. Some engage in what one teacher described as "crude talk" - sexual bantering in the hallways of the school, giving back what they get from the boys. Popular boys, said one student, hang with popular girls, but the boys are regarded as superior.

Abuse

Coed schools do have an undercurrent of mental and physical abuse and violence. I cannot, from my research, hazard any guess as to the extent of it, but I did hear a number of first hand accounts of harassment, mostly by boys, but sometimes also by girls, and by or against teachers. I heard about a girl being labelled a slut because she refused to help a boy with his homework, of heavier girls having jokes and loud remarks made about them constantly, of boys hitting girls on their breasts and faces, or making the girls run the gauntlet of their remarks to get to the washroom. Girls in coed schools often feel silenced, both by the attitudes of the boys, who they don't dare offend, and by the extra attention which boys get in the classroom from the teacher. Boys shout the girls down, or mimic their voices, or denigrate their responses in class. Boys get angry if a girl can do as well or better then they can athletically. "It threatens their popularity" said a student. Girls cope by "normalizing" the behaviours. They dismiss them with the comment "oh its' just the jerks." But once in an all girls' school, they say "it's so peaceful here" and "I feel free to talk in class."

Girls' Schools

In an all girls environment, status hierachies form also. But they seem to have a more impermanent nature. There are shifting alliances and open borders of groups. One student said that there were more leaders and less inequality. But some girls are still "unpopular." At the same time some reject the whole notion of popularity and choose to be with their own friends. Many of the RCJH girls say it is "less cliquey" than their previous, coed, school. They also said that some girls do get picked on, and that being popular is not necessarily the same as being liked. Popularity still has importance, and it appears that to some extent, peer culture transfers to a single-sex school. It is still important to listen to the "right" music, and adapt appearance in the same way as one's group membership requires. This is, perhaps, more true of River City Junior High Program, simply because there are more students, and because the students go home at night, and are more exposed to peer culture through out of school activities.

The status hierachy is reinforced by some adult views as to what kinds of girls do best, or are the greatest asset to, the school. These range from liking a uniform because it looks "classy" to commenting that what is wanted there are those who behave well and are highly motivated. A student felt that going back to her old school would be a "step down." On the other hand, many parents and students expressed discomfort with the idea that "their" school is considered elitist, or that the parents want it run like an upper class, private school.

Friendships in the girls' schools were perceived as having a different quality from those in a coed school. A significant difference was the perception that friendships would be more long lasting. Students in both schools said that they felt that away from boys they could make "friends for life." An interesting comment from a parent was that if these became lasting friendships, as many of the girls felt they would, then the girls would be forming social networks that would be very helpful to them in their future careers.

FEMINISM

Parents want girls who are strong leaders, independent, seldom or never dependent on a man financially, motivated hard workers and high achievers who will stand up for their rights. There is a strong sense of individualism - girls were to make their own way, be responsible for their own lives, be prepared to raise their children by themselves, pay their own way through school, etc. Teachers and parents shared similar goals for the young women in their care. While many hoped they would go to university, it was not seen as an essential. The important thing was to get what you needed to do what you wanted to do, and do it well. They wanted the girls to be able to make informed decisions and choices, to keep control of their own lives, to be disciplined and hard workers. They wanted them to be confident, self sufficient and strong, to be leaders with strong problem solving skills and ingenuity, and above all to be happy and at peace with themselves. They were not expected to marry or have children unless they wanted to do so, but if they did, they were to remain independent as much as possible. Many parents preferred that the mother stay home with young children, but many said it didn't matter if mother or father stayed home as long as someone did. Many also felt fine with the use of daycares, nannies and other forms of child care. The central tenet was that it was the woman's own choice.

Given all this it is surprising that the majority of adults interviewed would either prefer that the young women not be feminists, or at least only a certain type of feminist - not the radical, man-hating kind. Several said that men and women should be equal partners in a relationship, and equal in employment situations. Several called affirmative action a "necessary evil" while one or two said it was "unfair and unjust." Feminism often elicited the response "well it has such a negative connotation." Feminism was seen as "woman focused" or exclusive, anti-male, and wanting women's rights at the expense of "others." Girls were to go out and demand equality. but not at the expense of anyone else, and not raucously. Niceness is important, especially for women, and should not be sacrificed to change. Men, they said, have got to learn to treat women differently, but women should not descend to their level to teach them that. Some also saw feminists as anti-motherhood and as male bashing, aggressive women who wanted everything their own way.

Others were in favour of "some" feminism, and liked the women's studies component in both schools, "as long as it doesn't go too far" or because it was taught in a way that did not "deflect from other (important) events in history." They felt it was good to have the students see what other women have accomplished. The suggestion was made that an all girls' school has to be particularly careful not to be seen as critical of men, especially since it is just a few men who are doing the discriminating, not all men. For the students at RCJH, the fear that they might be perceived as man-hating is justified by the accusations hurled at them by other students occupying the same building, by students riding the buses with them, by neighbours, and even by adults approached at fund-raising events. The girls were accused of being lesbians, or told they would become lesbians, and of being boy hating snobs.

A very few parents would be "happy" even "proud" to have their daughters a feminist, while several made comments that could be summed up as "I'm not a feminist really. I just want everyone to be treated equally."

CONTRADICTIONS

There are a number of subtle and not so subtle contradictions in the views which I heard. Discontinuities are far more common to our thinking than we often realise. Consistency is highly prized in our culture but not very evident in what we say and do, and participants were no exception. A delightful contradiction emerged in how the student groups would describe the difference between their previous, coed, school and their present, segregated school. It really isn't very different, they would say, except for the uniforms, and the curriculum, and the teachers treat you differently, and there's a different feeling between the students, and it's much more fun in phys ed., and it's much more peaceful here, and it's much easier to ask questions in class. Perhaps the key to their feelings of similarity is that their peer culture has been transferred more or less in tact, but minus the original leaders. If this is so, then one has to wonder to what extent it is segregation that is affecting the girls' performance, and to what extent it is other factors such as class size, the different relationship with teachers which was reported in both schools, the chance to start from scratch in a school where there are no existing cliques, etc. Some of this will become clearer as RCJH's newness wears off, and as its size increases. At CGS, it would be very difficult to isolate segregation from isolation, from a very different approach to education, and from the effects of the Christian community which runs the school.

Many of the students do deny or play down their past experiences. When they talk about being teased, being ostracised, being discriminated against by a bad teacher, they will say things like "oh, it was just that one boy/girl/teacher/group" or "my friends were being mean about how much I ate" and then when questioned further as to which friends were doing this teasing (I was curious how they could still be seen as friends), "it was just the boys really." In spite of which, "I've yet to meet" a male that discriminates. "It's just a few who do it," or it's just "the jerks" who do it... and yet the experiences they recounted were common. I would see girls around the table in a student group nodding, and hear "yeah" often.

Carrying on from this, most of the students and some parents were adamant that the move to a segregated school was not made because they didn't like boys or blamed them for their academic performance. It was made because they wanted to be able to focus on their school work. Boys were a distraction, but it wasn't their fault, they were not to blame. It was the girls who needed to change their ways. Once they had their self-esteem and confidence back, they could go back into a coed school and begin working on other girls and the boys there.

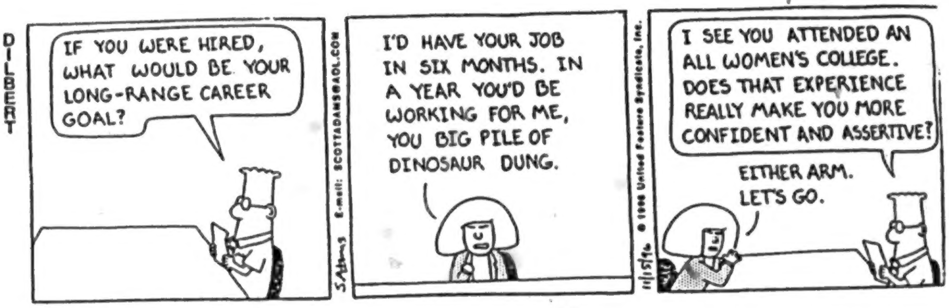
APPENDIX E continued

A further contradiction is that the protectiveness of parents, their desire to remove their daughters from any distractions from their school work, as well as to remove them from the dominance and harassment of the boys, led to a push to independence and self sufficiency in their daughters - they were protecting them for now, but the young women were expected to become strong, independent and self-sufficient by the end of junior high (RCJH) or high school (CGS). An interesting side effect here was that neither parents nor teachers were prepared for the results of their work, and there was one delightful story of a rebellion that took teachers by surprise.

There were subtle differences in parental attitudes toward what they wanted from their daughters and how they described the characteristics of boys. Aggressive was not approved of for example, but girls were to be independent and self sufficient, respectful communicators challenging male dominance. The hallmark of success was happiness, more than achieving leadership in their chosen career, and they were to develop skills that would enable them to take care of children on their own if they had to. Confrontation was seen as counter productive. To confront both boxes in the opponent, and lowers a woman's status - it takes her down to the man's level (in itself an interesting reversal of the "view from the bridge").

The goals of parents and teachers appear to be aimed at giving the girls the same, or similar, skills and characteristics as the boys but not to turn the girls into boys. The line was drawn at aggression and at certain levels of competition - they were not to advance at someone else's expense. Further, they were not to be feminists, since feminists were aggressive and confrontational, not "nice." It is very important to be nice, one student said, because you need lots of friends. These confident and independent women would be distanced from the women's movement.

APPENDIX F
Dilbert Cartoon


DILBERT
IF YOU WERE HIRED, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LONG-RANGE CAREER GOAL?
S.Adams
E-mail: SCOTTADAMS@AOL.COM
I'D HAVE YOUR JOB IN SIX MONTHS. IN A YEAR YOU'D BE WORKING FOR ME, YOU BIG PILE OF DINOSAUR DUNG.
11/15/96 © 1996 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.
I SEE YOU ATTENDED AN ALL WOMEN'S COLLEGE. DOES THAT EXPERIENCE REALLY MAKE YOU MORE CONFIDENT AND ASSERTIVE?
EITHER ARM. LET'S GO.